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AUSTRALIAN AND BRITISH SOCCER WEEKLY

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SELANGOR'S TWIN JEWELS

BY JOHN ECONOMOS

MEHMET DURAKOVIC, Australia's unfortunately forgotten international defender, has had nothing but success since moving across to play in the rich and healthy Malaysian National Soccer League.

Durakovic moved to Malaysia when giant club Selangor signed him three years ago from South Melbourne.

Since joining the 'Red Giants' Durakovic has given nothing but quality and sterling service, which has not gone unnoticed by the hierarchy at Selangor.

This year he was thus rewarded with the captaincy of Selangor, a rare honour for a 'foreigner' in Malaysian Soccer. Sarawak's long-serving centre-back, Dave Evans, from Perth, is the only other 'foreign' captain in the Malaysian National League.

His three years at Selangor has made Durakovic the longest serving 'foreigner' to have ever served the 'Red Giants'.

" I have been playing as a 'screener' lately, but this hasn't stopped me from scoring the odd goal or two for Selangor," stated Mehmet to ABSW last week.

In fact Durakovic ended the League season as the club's second top goalscorer despite his defensive role.

During this season Selangor had three overseas players, including former West Ham ace striker Tony Cottee and Welsh international central marker Jeff Hopkins.

Selangor (the 'Manchester United' of Malaysia), this season has won the F.A.Cup, defeating Penang 1-0 in the Final as well as the Charity Shield by defeating Kedah 2-0.

The durable Durakovic, in the last two years, has also won two prestigious Malaysian Cup winners' medals with Selangor and will be seeking his straight hat-trick this Saturday night in the Final.

Durakovic, the man former Australian coach Eddie Thomson selected to track England's Gary Lineker and Frenchman Jean Pierre Papin, is under contract till the end of next season.

But it is expected that this tough Australian defender will remain at Selangor for two more seasons.

"We have a mighty sweeper in Zainal Abidin Hassan.

"He is something very special, if not incredible.

"Not only is he 35 years old, but has played an unbelievable 180 internationals for the national team of Malaysia," stated Durakovic to ABSW.

Selangor's powerful veteran sweeper, 35 year old Zainal Abidin Hassan, embracing his captain Mehmet Durakovic after the 'Red Giants' had defeated Perlis 2-0 at the magnificent Shah Alam Stadium in Selangor.

Editorial

Our Bursting Mail Bag

It appears the opinions we have published, by former and present players/coaches has got the writing juices flowing in many of you out there.

Not surprising really, the issues being raised are somewhat contentious, but they do need looking at.

Several readers have expressed their thoughts over the phone. May we thank you for that but reiterate, if you want to see your name in print, you must either:

1/ Write to us at the editorial address shown (including name, address and telephone number, although these need not appear, just so long as we have them for legal reasons), or,

2/ Email us on: soccer@foreignlanguage.com.au

Those of you who wish to make abusive and/or racial comments, further their own interests or use expletives have as much chance of reading their work, if they have the guts to send their REAL name and address, as an ice cube lasting more than ten minutes in the Gobi Desert!

Your opinions are always welcomed, some informed, others, maybe not so, but the sport we all adore is all about opinions. It would be very boring if we all thought, said and acted the same way.

Keep your ideas coming in, especially those of you with thoughts on how you, if asked to do so, would change the game in Australia.

You know it makes sense.

★★★

We hope to be bringing you some exciting news about your ABSW in the very near future.

As there is only one more issue to go before Christmas, don't forget to order your copy at the newsagents because next week's publication promises to be a lot of fun, and one that will keep you guessing over the festive season ...perhaps?

We are exploring several avenues that, we hope and believe, will bring you a better all-round view of World Football, more of the local scene and some features that may amaze (why hasn't this been done before?), astound (I never knew you could fit all that in) and shock (in their simplicity) some readers ... then again, perhaps not, ABSW readers, being the most discerning after all.

More of that in the New Year.

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◆ **Deadline for contributions, articles and advertising is 7 days PRIOR to issue date.**

Australia 0 Brazil 0

By Micky Brock

Australia confounded their critics at the King Fahd Stadium in Riyadh on Sunday night as they held out for a 0-0 draw with World Champions Brazil, now giving the Socceroos four points from six in their group games in the Confederations Cup.

The early stages of the match saw Brazil threaten to dominate as Bebeto put Ronaldo through on goal, but his attempted flick past goalkeeper Bosnich was well saved by the outstretched left arm of the Australian custodian, not the last time he would save his side this evening.

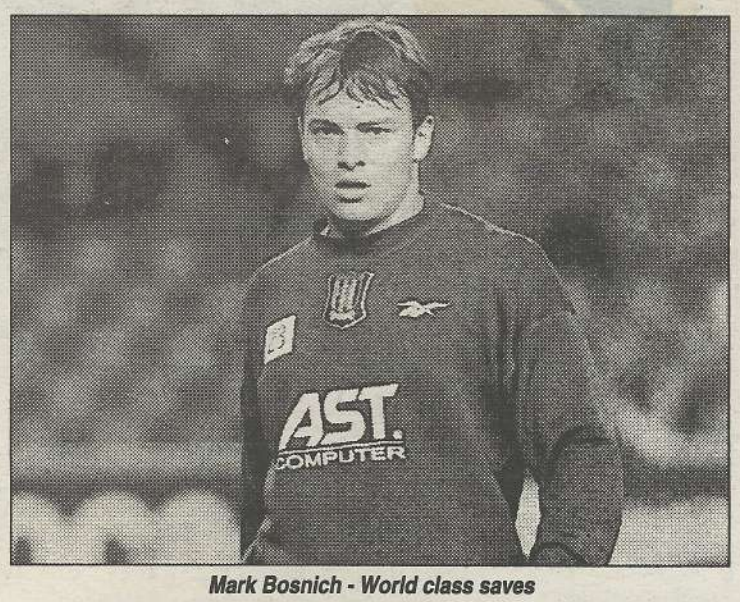
Minutes later and it was Roberto Carlos who was in this time as Brazil were seemingly opening up the Australian defence at will. A last ditch tackle saved any blushes this time though.

Following this Australia had a free-kick, inside the box, but Aloisi's shot was sent rocketing upwards before the Nigerian referee spotted an infringement and Brazil were let off the hook.

Then, in the 23rd minute of play, Flavio was put clean through and this time Bosnich was well beaten low down to his right, but, for the unfortunate Brazilian, his shot cannoned off the base of the upright and was scrambled away upfield by a thankful defence.

Australia could have been, without doubt, 0-2 down but remained on level terms with some resolute defending and the odd flash of inspiration, much stemming from the under-rated Stan Lazaridis, playing in the left wing-back role.

Craig Foster made a memorable break down the right flank, surging forward before laying the ball off for Viduka whose shot, from a tight angle to the right and just inside the box, didn't quite carry enough sting to beat the keeper.



Mark Bosnich - World class saves

In the last minute of the half, Roberto Carlos took a 30 metre free-kick that made the ball fizz past the right hand post with Bosnich probably beaten by the pace, the ball being a blur, even in slow motion.

The second half started brightly for Australia as Viduka played the ball out wide for Lazaridis. His cross was met by Aloisi inside the area but his header went wide of the mark.

Seconds later and Bosnich was in the action again as he saved a point blank bullet header from Ronaldo — yet another world class save.

Ernie Tapai joined the fray after 60 minutes, on for Aurelio Vidmar and Damian Mori came on for John Aloisi after 69. Mori was promptly booked nine minutes later.

Matt Bingley came on, in a tactical substitution, with around 30 seconds remaining and Mark Viduka ambled off the pitch all smiles.

Bosnich was the stand out for Australia but, as often happens lately, Stan Lazaridis wasn't very far behind.

Great result for Australia, who now face Saudi Arabia in their next match, knowing a draw will see them through to the next round. However, a high scoring win for Australia would see them top the group.

What were the odds on that at the start of the series?

Australia 3 Mexico 1

By Micky Brock

Australia finally hit the form we all knew they were capable of when beating Mexico 3-1 last Friday morning (EST) in the Confederations Cup, first round, in Saudi Arabia.

The thought that it was all 'too little, too late' will not be wasted on Australian fans, especially those present at the MCG on that fateful night in November.

When all is said and done, full credit must go to the players for dragging themselves back from the gutter and despair of that game, so much so that they beat a side that is higher ranked than them.

Stout defending, allied to a very high workrate, ensured the victory after two goals from John Aloisi, Mark Viduka and a further from substitute Damian Mori, on a night when Australia's finishing was clinical.

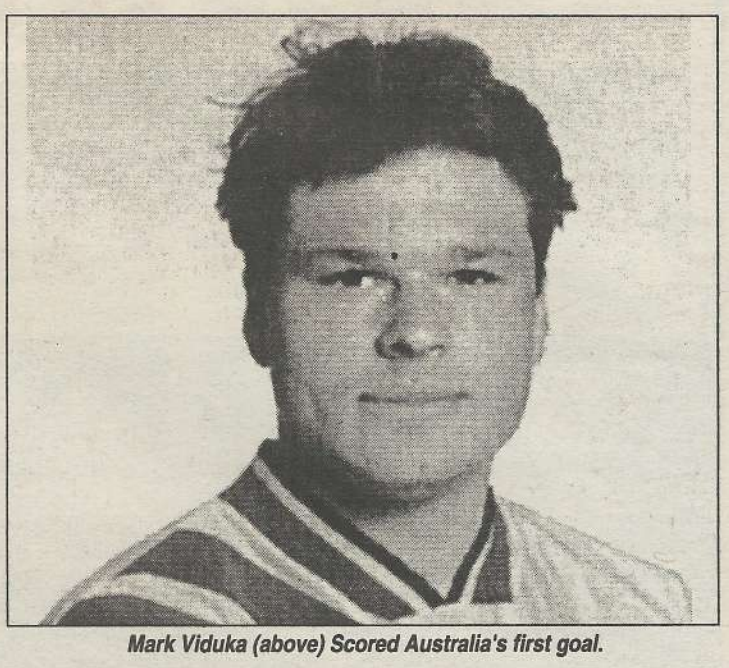
Viduka started the ball rolling when he 'toe-poked' past Mexican goalkeeper, Oswaldo Sanchez, in the 45th minute.

John Aloisi followed up with Australia's second in the 61st minute, after Alex Tobin could have made it two minutes before.

The third came from Adelaide City striker Damian Mori, who came on for Viduka after 73 minutes. He headed home from a Foster cross, (Foster really shone in midfield alongside Ned Zelic).

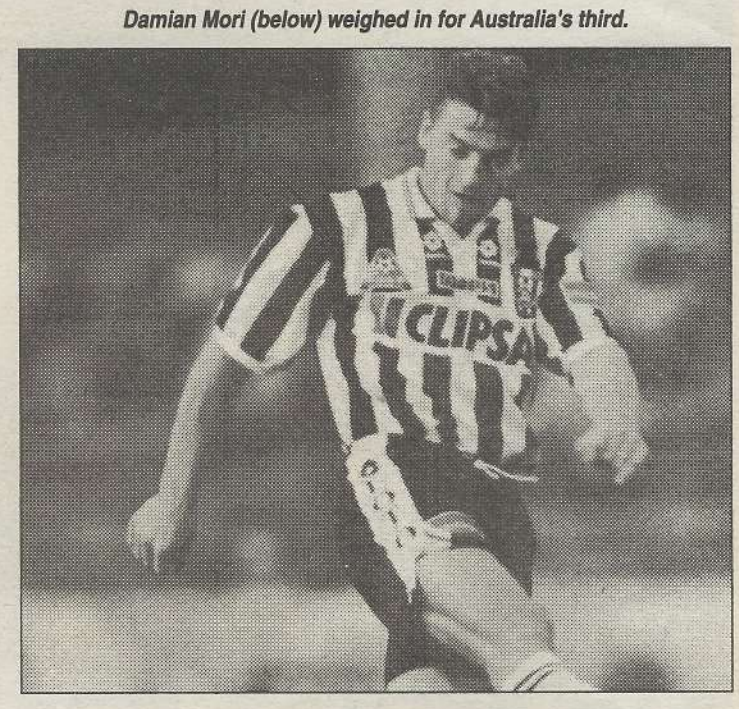
Mexico pulled one back with an 80th minute penalty, scored by Luis Hernandez, but it was never going to enough to start the ball rolling in their favour, although, to lose by a two goal margin may have been on the generous side.

Zeljko Kalac, in goal for Australia, was in sparkling form and had little to do, apart from the penalty, but when called in to action, was not found wanting.



Mark Viduka (above) Scored Australia's first goal.

Damian Mori (below) weighed in for Australia's third.



GOOD OIL GOOD OIL GOOD OIL

BY JOHN ECONOMOS

MARK BABIC, Marconi's powerful central defender, seems not to be able to score a trick.

Having just overcome all his injuries, big Mark now started to look forward to some good luck.

Well, recently Mark won the Club's best and fairest performance prize.

Great you would think.

But Mark, who is a keen vegetarian, looked forward to collecting his prize..

The prize?

A package containing no less than $150 of meats kindly donated by Melosi.

❑❑❑

THE F.A. OF MALAYSIA is always thinking of the welfare of its players.

All professional players that have played for seven years or more in their National Soccer League, will be entitled to a superannuation lump sum payment of some $60,00 for each and every year he has served.

However, such a 'pension' is not made available to any 'foreign' players, only the locals.

❑❑❑

THE SYDNEY OLYMPIC saga with the Rene Rivkin takeover, took a sharp turn late last week.

At a court hearing it was ruled that the Members' meeting that took place to give the flamboyant former stockbroker the go ahead to takeover, was in fact an invalid meeting on a legal technicality.

But the Eastern Suburbs Rugby League proposal is not dead and buried just yet.

Another Members' meeting has been called to be held in February.

❑❑❑

MELBOURNE KNIGHTS' coach Ken Worden strongly denied last weekend that he was about to depart from his Victorian Club.

Mark Babic: Gets to the meat of things.

Press statements broke out last week in Malaysia that Worden was on the short list to takeover Negeri Sembilan.

"Not true. I have not applied for the job," pleaded Worden.

"Malaysian papers always have speculative stories printed."

❑❑❑

JOHN ALOISI, Australia's international striker, who scored last Saturday morning against Mexico in the Confederation Cup being played in Saudi Arabia, gave an outstanding display of attacking Soccer.

And as for his goal...world class, nothing else.

Aloisi gathered in possession, just as he saw two Mexican defenders moving in from either side.

Calmly, he dragged the ball with his left foot past both Mexicans before letting fly with his right to hit the target from an angle on the right.

What a goal.

The 21-year old Aloisi has already scored nine league goals for his new English club Portsmouth, in the first division.

Rene Rivkin: Sydney Olympic's predator.

❑❑❑

AUSTRALIA's third match, against Saudi Arabia in the Confederation Cup, will be screened live by Channel Seven tomorrow morning (Wednesday 1.30am).

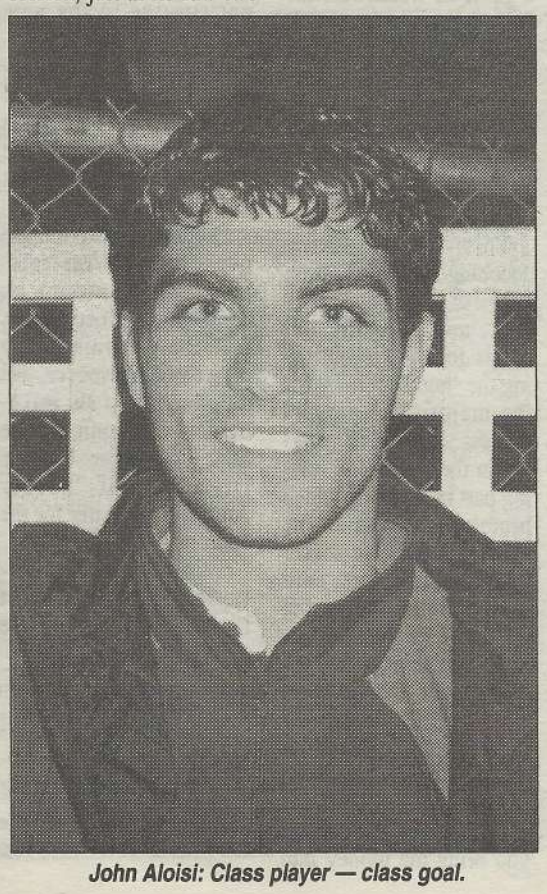
The two semi-finals will be screened live on Saturday, December 20 at 1.55am and 4am.

The Final will be telecast next Monday, live, at 4.45am.

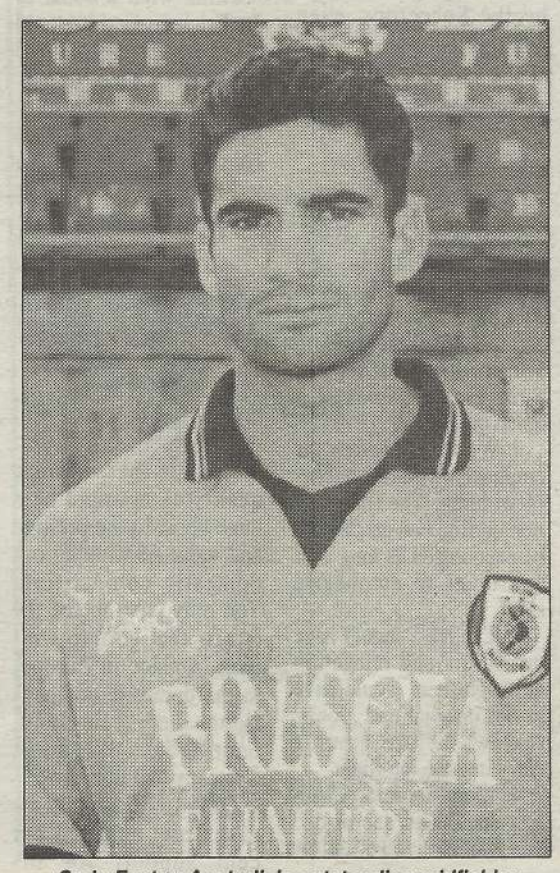
❑❑❑

First time in the history of the NSL a referee pulled up a keeper for holding the ball for too long, at last Sunday's game between Olympic and Knights.

According to Micky Brock, this is about time, what's more, from the resulting free-kick Olympic scored and ended up winning the game on their return to Belmore (which attracted more fans than the usual 50 at the SFS). The referee was West Australian Eddie Lennie, well done Ed!



John Aloisi: Class player — class goal.



Craig Foster: Australia's outstanding midfielder.

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CHANGES? WHAT CHANGES . . .

BY STUART JONES

Because of the overwhelming response to last week's article, we are continuing this week with more observations on possible changes to the game here in Australia. The question is:
If Soccer Australia asked you for five changes needed today to improve soccer in this country, what would they be?

COL CURRAN (FORMER '74 SOCCEROO)

1. Choose players who play with their heart. Pick more local based players in the team, say a 50-50 mix.
2. A good strong youth policy.
3. NSL still good quality but it needs more promotion. The Rugby League fraternity are scared of the potential of soccer.
4. We need more games overseas like in Asia. This builds togetherness.
5. Coach needs to be based in Australia, he can then check out those playing here, if they are playing in the first team regularly overseas then they are obviously playing well and can be chosen.

RAY RICHARDS (FORMER '74 SOCCEROO)

1. Majority of players should be home-based, being together all the time, pull in only some key players from overseas.
2. Develop our own personalities in the League.
3. NSL is dead in the water at present, needs a rethink.
4. Pull in a top South American coach instead of British influence. Have some flair and imagination involved.
5. Find a national sponsor for our national coach.

MARIO ETCHART (MEDIA)

1. Change the structure of the NSL.
2. Revamp the transfer system.
3. Review those involved in the management at Soccer Australia.
4. Focus on the basic skills being taught to the youngsters.
5. ALL the national teams at all levels need more games, from against Sth America, Africa, and Asia teams.

GARY MAROCCHI (COACH)

1. Set up an administrative structure for coaches and players.
2. Offer incentives for local people to be involved.
3. Develop a four to five year plan for all levels of the national side.
4. Increase the profile of the NSL. We cannot put all our eggs in the Socceroo basket again.
5. Go to other tournaments in Asia, the Middle East, and South America to gain exposure to more teams. Even send the Youth team to senior tournaments occasionally.

TED SIMMONS (MEDIA)

1. Look at coaching structure overall. Try and bring in younger coaches and match them up with more experienced ones.
2. Review the communication area in the game. Communication between groups such as SA, the state leagues, referees and coaching associations, and the media. Clubs need to start increasing their exposure in this are as well.
3. Make the administration more efficient, eg: dealing with referee reports. More consistency across state and national levels.
4. Continue the modernisation of the game. David Hill has modified the old ASF, when he leaves many changes will have occurred. We need more expressive leaders like Hill in soccer in this country.
5. Youth emphasis on skills. It is the grassroots where we lose the 16 and 17-year olds. Do not treat 10-year olds as footballers as they are too young.

ALISTAIR EDWARDS (AUSTRALIAN PLAYER IN MALAYSIA)

1. Continue to support someone with charisma and strength, like David Hill, in his current job. Stop the back stabbing inside soccer.
2. Use Perth Glory as a model for other NSL teams.
3. Have positive people involved in the game and stop the negativity that has for so long surrounded the game of soccer in Australia.
4. Look at regional clubs in the cities away from ethnic bases, for instance, an Eastern Suburbs, Western Suburbs, and Northern Suburbs team in Sydney.
5. Use the energy that came form this campaign by the Socceroos, even though we failed.

STUART JONES (MEDIA)

1. We need a technical director to overlook all levels of international and national soccer - as well as a manager, plus a revamp of the bureaucracy in Soccer Australia at present, a review would save SA much money.
2. We need to review the emphasis in junior soccer of winning. The introduction on Roo ball etc. should be encouraged as long as it continues to emphasise skills.
3. The NSL should have promotion and relegation although there would have to be financial and ground reviews before gaining entry into the top flight.
4. More Socceroo quality games, with one or two youngsters involved in the games already.
5. An Asian Champions Cup would be great, as long as we tried hard not to offend our guests, or the countries we visit!

ROY HAY (MEDIA)

For a more in-depth analysis of this issue, **Roy Hay**, our Youth League correspondent, shares his ideas with ABSW's **Stuart Jones**.

Before the recriminations get too heated, can we start focusing on where we go from here in Australian soccer? Certainly the defeat is hard to take, but let's not use that as an excuse to re-embark on the internecine warfare which has bedevilled the game in this country since the war.

There are some great opportunities at the national and international level and just as David Hill has insisted rightly, that we focus on getting to France in 1998, now this is behind us, we ought to concentrate on what we can do in the future.

There is a proposal before FIFA at the moment for a World Club Championship. This has UEFA support, though the clubs are cool, there is strong support from Africa and Asia. Australia ought to back this for all it's worth and ensure one place at the table for the top Australian club.

Think what a boost to the Ericsson Cup it would be if an Ericsson Cup team had a chance to play against an Inter Milan, Boca Juniors or a Croatia Zagreb? Imagine Carlton v Manchester Utd, or Perth Glory v Juventus?

Even if there were a qualifying it would be a huge boost to the prestige and value of winning our domestic competition. You only have to see the efforts that go into winning 'a place in Europe' in the domestic competitions of England, Scotland, France, Germany and Italy etc.

David Hill should be given one hundred per cent support for his attempt to have the Australian national team competing in the Asian championships in the years between World Cups. At the very least this would mean that Australian players would get together more often for competitive matches.

We need to boost the profile of our host of quality internationally experienced players, rather than restrict their movement overseas, which is all that seems to be touted by some people inside the game.

David Hill also insists on the aim of full-time professionalism. He is absolutely right on this one. It is the only way to get our clubs out of their financial problems which Mike Cockerill, Ray Gatt and others are moaning about. How does this happen? How can clubs afford full-time professionalism? The answer is simple: change the culture and meaning of professionalism.

Instead of training two nights a week and playing a game at weekends, the full-time professional needs to train every day, to rest for the appropriate period, and to work for the remainder of his time promoting his club (the very people paying his wages).

This means taking coaching clinics, meeting business people and sponsors, and carrying out duties for the club utilising the 'non-soccer' skills the majority of players possess. It means appearing in the media and taking part in anything which promotes the game. The modern Australian soccer player is articulate, educated and presentable, but we don't begin to make use of the talents.

In other words, you work for the club for the same number of hours as full-time professionals do in other areas of life and you earn your salary. If you bring the money into the club, you effectively pay your own wages and you raise your own profile, and that of the club, at the same time.

Perth Glory is already pointing the way, and although it is not unique, it has some advantages in being in Perth. Its model is not Australian soccer, but Australian Rules Football, which is professionally run and marketed in Western Australia.

The people behind Perth Glory are rightly concerned that their efforts and commitment are not being backed up in the rest of the country. The Carlton club, despite being caught in the backwash of the Collingwood fiasco, is trying to go the same way. It is investing heavily at this stage and the rewards are meagre so far, but if the club does not lose its nerve it will succeed. It has said that it is in the game for the long haul, but that means the other clubs must begin to match its efforts.

Those other clubs are struggling. Soccer Australia needs to rethink its scheduling so that clubs can maximise revenue through the gates, rather than switching games and times to suit other agenda. It also has to overcome its reputation of being anti-ethnic and become clearly and obviously supportive of the clubs which make up the league until such time as they show that they cannot survive in the new world.

There is a difficult transition going on and it will not be assisted by a battle over the control of the code between the clubs and Soccer Australia.

On the other front however, Soccer Australia also needs to revamp its constitution to become, in fact, the governing body of Australian soccer, not the creature of its stakeholders. The quicker the State Federations become Divisions of Soccer Australia the better for the sport overall.

This is happening slowly, and by stealth, but it really should be made explicit and quickly.

LOOKING AHEAD ...

For the next few years the emphasis has to be on youth. The Olyroo build-up for the Olympic Games in Sydney 2000 will be crucial. We are guaranteed a place, but no competitive qualifying games. This requires careful management because the lack of competitive matches has been cited again and again as one of the problems of the Socceroo World Cup qualification. So after the Confederations Cup, Soccer Australia needs to use some of its new found wealth to develop a program for the Olyroos in Asia and further afield.

Looking at the younger age groups, Jochen Musch (University of Bonn) and I have clear evidence that the age group competitions we currently run contain a systematic bias against younger kids. Children born more than three months after the cut-off date for any age group do significantly less well in terms of senior selection than those born close to that date, and the bias increases the younger the player is, until the next cut-off date. We need to think about ways of removing such discrimination.

The Institutes of Sport in Australia are brilliant, but there are simply not enough places available for the talent we need to put through their programs. We need to get back into the clubs with the facilities developed around a range of programs in each centre.

This is the direction which is being recommended in the various European surveys which have been undertaken. We had pioneered the way with our institutes but we are in danger of being overtaken as other countries concentrate more on youth.

Finally, and here I declare an interest, the National Youth League, the best kept secret in Australian soccer, needs to have its profile raised and restructured. The current competition, with three or two byes every round, is farcical. Though the talent is being concentrated it is not being given the kind of platform it should have if the players are to graduate smoothly to senior soccer.

Next week read the final instalment in this ABSW survey of what you, the readers, players, coaches etc, think Aussie Soccer should be doing.

AROUND THE CLUBS

Illawarra News

DIMOSKI BACK IN BUSINESS FOR HUNGRY WOLVES

BY PHIL MURPHY

Sasho Dimoski made a long overdue return to the Wolves squad at the weekend, after being recalled when Ray Younis was admitted to hospital with a mystery virus.

Sasho Dimoski: "I will take my chance when it comes."

Younis was initially selected as a replacement for the game against Perth Glory, at Perth Oval, while Dimoski was one of the stars of Wollongong's Waratah Cup success this year. He scored eight goals in the $50,000 series and was poised for a big season in the Ericsson Cup.

However, during training 48 hours before the match against Marconi, Dimoski suffered a 'quad' injury and was out of action for a month before making his comeback in youth grade last week, in the 3-2 win against ACT Academy.

The former U/23 international told ABSW he still hoped to get his share of goals this season. "It was very disappointing to miss so many games after a successful pre-season," he said.

"The boys have been doing very well and the strikers did their job against Canberra to beat them 8-0.

"I will take my chance when it comes."

☆☆☆

Wolves goalkeeper, Brett Hughes, has vowed to win back his first team spot.

Before the 8-0 win over Canberra, Hughes was replaced in goal by Adam Broadbeck, and the regular custodian said he was very disappointed to be dropped because he felt he did well in the previous game away to South Melbourne.

Coach, Nick Theodorakopoulos, said Hughes was dropped because he hadn't been showing enough authority in his area.

Broadbeck, who gained experience in the Ericsson Cup last year, obviously didn't have a lot to do against Canberra and held his spot in the side which went to Perth at the weekend.

☆☆☆

Sunday night's game between Sydney United and Wollongong should be very interesting. United have obviously come a long way since they last played against Wolves.

Wollongong won 3-1 and qualified for the Waratah Cup Final but United have a more awesome look about them these days, and have been sitting in the top two all year.

What's more, Jason Culina could easily have ended up in Wollongong. He was negotiating with the club about the time the two teams met in that Waratah Cup tie, however, he decided to stay with the Sydney team, after some interest from Wolves' opponents last weekend, Perth Glory.

☆☆☆

In the early part of last season, Wolves captain, Matt Horsley, was up with the league's leading goalscorers. However, after nine games of this campaign, he has yet to find the net!

When asked why, the discerning (!) Horsley replied that he had decided to score his goals in the second half of the season: "They're more important," he concluded. Looking forward to that Matt!

MARCONI SIGN KOREAN STAR

BY AIDAN ORMOND

Korean football has continued to blossom over the past two decades. World Cup appearances have shown that Korean players, and their game, are a force to be reckoned with in one of the world's booming Soccer regions, Asia.

With this in mind Marconi, always a leader in innovative signings (they currently feature the silky skills of Italian stars Ansaldi, Marino plus Gabriel Mendez), have caught the wave and signed a Korean legend for a six match stint.

His name is Pan-Keun Kim and his record is second to none. Kim has played in two World Cups for South Korea (Italia 90 and USA 94), and represented his nation 45 times.

Stallions' supremo, Zoran Matic, has been extremely impressed with the elegant sweeper/libero and was very keen to sign him, particularly given the injuries to his now depleted squad.

However the elegant Korean star initially fielded offers from Japan, but happily for Australian Soccer, chose Marconi.

Signing the agreement late last week, the new player said : "I have heard much about Marconi in Korea when they played a two-match series against our champion side. Marconi are renowned as the leading club in Australia and I have been very impressed with the professional set-up and I am eager to play."

Marconi's Football manager, Frank Labbozzetta, has indicated that he is keen to foster closer ties with the expanding Asian region and is ecstatic with Kim's "genuine world class talent," adding that "we invite the fans to come and see for themselves this little gem in action."

It was hoped that his international clearance would have arrived in time for last weekend's clash with the champions of Australia, Brisbane Strikers.

Marconi are leading the way with innovative signings, this time with the Korean star Kim.

Victorian Update

RANGERS FOR ERICSSON CUP?

By Dwyght Tuffnell

Soccer Australia expects to receive at least six bids for next season's Ericsson Cup. However, one bid being developed for 1999/2000 is from Melbourne's eastern suburbs.

The proposed name is the East Melbourne Rangers, and it is to represent an area of Melbourne consisting of about fifty clubs.

The last time this area had a team in the Ericsson Cup was in 1977, with Mooroolbark, but unfortuntatey the 'Barkers' were not successful and did not last long in the then Philips National league.

"It can be a successful if it represents the whole of the eastern suburbs," says one of the East Melbourne Rangers' prime movers, Julian Pettegree.

Along with partner Richard Penny, the duo will be approaching the local councils, clubs and businessess for backing in the project.

Pettegree is an ardent fan of what Perth Glory have achieved, and believes he can duplicate that kind of success in this Aussie Rules stronghold of Melbourne.

The proposal is still in its infancy, however as Pettegree insists, it is a matter of "getting it right and getting financial."

"If it is marketed to the eastern suburbs it could become a leading light in the Ericsson Cup," he added.

Good luck to the bid.

☆☆☆

On a less positive note, it has been suggested that two Melbourne clubs, Melbourne Knights and Gippsland Falcons, may come under the spotlight and be omitted from the league for next year.

☆☆☆

On another issue that was raised last week in ABSW, it looks like South Melbourne will have to remove their 'Lakers' nickname.

It will change after the club discovered that they could be in breach of trademark laws, a point brought to their attention by the LA Lakers basketball side in the US.

This also means their logo will have to be changed too.

This is expected to be finalised for the start of next season.

And the Lakers (sorry South Melbourne!) are not the only ones. The American club is cracking down on other codes too, who have the 'temerity' to use their nickname.

Don't get used to this logo. The LA Lakers want to take it off South Melbourne!

Mark Read's Darwin All Sports

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Premier League Big Match

Div	Draw	Div
2.80 Newcastle	3.25	Man Utd 2.20

Kick off 4.00pm Sunday GMT

Who will score the first goal?

A.Cole....6.00
T.Sheringham....8.00
F.Asprilla....9.00
O.Solskjaer....10.00
P.Scholes....11.00
J.Tomasson....11.00
J.Barnes....11.00
T.Ketsbaia....13.00
D.Beckham....14.00
R.Giggs....14.00
K.Gillespie....16.00
R.Lee....16.00
N.Butt....17.00
J.Beresford....26.00
G.Pallister....35.00

Other quotes available

FA Cup 1998

Arsenal....7.00
Man Utd....9.00
Liverpool....9.00
Leeds....10.00
Chelsea....11.00
Blackburn....11.00
Newcastle....12.00
Aston Villa....15.00
West Ham....21.00
Derby....21.00
Tottenham....26.00
Leicester....26.00
Sheff Wed....26.00
Wimbledon....35.00
C.Palace....41.00
Everton....41.00
Bolton....41.00
Middlesbro'....51.00
Nottm Forest....51.00

Champions Cup '98

Man Utd....3.25
Juventus....5.00
Real Madrid....5.50
Bayern....6.00
Dortmund....8.00
Dinamo Kiev....12.00
Leverkusen....12.00
Monaco....21.00

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Let's not slip backwards!

Dear Sir,

Alright, we have lost the last place in the France 98 World Cup Finals. Now for the repercussions. There has been much media, and internal, speculation about the fact that if we missed out, 'the knives will be out for the Hill regime..' etc. Well let's think first about what is best for Australian soccer this time.

I know David Hill has enemies because of the tough actions and decisions that have been made, but he has made them for what he firmly believed is the right way for soccer to go, and I agree with him.

Before we decide to throw the good work down the drain by having the regular scene of Australian soccer self-destructing — when a united front is really required — let's consider which of the following scenarios we really want for the sport in this country. Consider the following two choices:

1/ Continue to encourage and foster a growing and massive display of BROAD community support, as evidenced by 42,000 at the Brisbane Grand Final, 90,000 at the World Cup game in Melbourne, capacity houses in Perth etc. The fact is that Soccer Australia managed to have ALL of Australia UNITED and 100% behind a soccer team. Not just the crowd, but three pages every day in every newspaper leading up to the match (remember how we previously whined about no media coverage?), radio coverage, TV coverage, even in the current affairs programs and cricket commentators, who don't know the first thing about expressing soccer sentiments said: "I almost cried last night, it was so emotional, those guys were magnificent," and a whole range of other sporting celebrities expressing their agony at the result, all united behind our great sport. Remember, we still have the Confederations Cup and then the Olympic Tournament, in our own backyard, so we need this support.

2/ Revert back to our insular ways, backbiting, arguing, backstabbing, blood letting for our own vested interests etc. If we choose this one, we might as well revert back to Croatia v Pan Hellenic and be done with it.

If we choose the latter, then you would have lost me, and a whole new wave of Australian support, support that, if it can be marshalled as it was by David Hill recently, will take Soccer to the top of the Australian sporting tree and beyond.

Australians showed all of us that they want soccer, and will support Australian soccer under the right circumstances. As the Sunday Telegraph reported from Melbourne: 'For a day, soccer was Australia's national sport!'

Surely this provides the incentive to carry on?

P Turnbull,
NSW

WORLD CUP WAKE

Dear Sir,

As a sport lover and Soccer fan I am saddened by the failure of our Socceroos to qualify for the 98 World Cup.

No criticism should be directed at the squad, which showed the world their talent and enthusiasm.

Soccer Australia Chairman David Hill and Coach Terry Venables have, however, a lot to answer for.

For David Hill's part, corporate 'high flying' has created a black hole in the finances of Soccer Australia and only a bumper crowd in Melbourne has helped the situation slightly. But the eventual failure to qualify rests with Venables.

A good coach certainly passes on technical skills to his players, but what about tactics and strategy?

Sure, the initial attacking style by the Socceroos produced two goals, but once the warning siren sounded at 2-1, containment should have been the order. Who better to introduce at this point than Milan Ivanovic.

Together with Alex Tobin, and given specific instructions (for example: no further offside trap risks) the end result would surely have been a good one.

Australia had only two 'real' hurdles to jump on the way to France and we knew it would be a opponent from Asia, but our preparation for it was very poor.

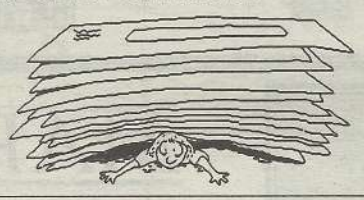
The 'bottom line' question should be asked: What benefit has been passed on to Soccer in general and the local competition, in particular by these high flyers? *Answer:* very little. Attendances are down and big clubs have been aggravated. After years of a national competition we still witness a marketing flop every year prior to the launch of a season, the start is too close to the end of both Rugby and Aussie Rules, programs take a long time to appear at the venues, and if you are not attached to one of the clubs as a member, information arrives at a trickle.

Let us hope that the next national coach manages to live in Australia, passes his skills to as many players as possible, is a dedicated leader and benefits the sport overall.

P.K. Tamm
Adelaide, SA

Letters to the Editor

Have your say on any soccer issue in the world. Preference will be given to short letters. Include daytime phone number for verification.



The Editor,
Australian & British Soccer Weekly
PO BOX 155,
Marrickville
NSW 2204
Fax: (02) 9550-9332

Short letters of about 400 words will be given preference in this column.

The opinions expressed on this page do not necessarily reflect those of this newspaper

Condolences to the Socceroos

Dear Sir,

Firstly, I would like to offer my condolences to the Socceroos, and all the fans, for that sad day on November 29. The players played their hearts out and they could not be faulted for that lapse, since our best team have only played a handful of matches together.

They were badly underdone in relation to the match hardened Iranians.

Hopefully, Soccer Australia will have learned from this, however, unlike some people, I think it would be a backward step to sack Hill and Co. This is the time for everyone to get together, to move forward and not engage in pathetic politics.

Despite the final result, the game was the biggest winner on the night, with a sellout crowd at Australian sport's 'Mecca'.

Although we had 12 wins under Venables, it has to be said that Iran were the first tough team we faced, since they were playing a game every weekend. All the previous matches were 'friendlies' against ordinary teams like Hungary and Macedonia and, although Tunisia were a good team, they certainly left their scoring boots at home that evening.

Friendlies should only be played against 'elite' teams, because Oceania is certainly holding us back. We have, potentially, an excellent side, but they simply lacked the experience of playing together in pressure situations. Soccer Australia must capitalise on the 'new' fans gained recently, and host some high profile nations in the near future. Apparently, Brazil is due to play here next year?

What we really need is more exposure in Cup competition, such as the Kirin Cup in Japan, and the many tournaments similar to this. We desperately need to gain experience in some type of continental competition, such as the Asian Cup or Asian Games.

I also heard that the previous administration opted to play a home-and-away series against the fourth placed Asian team, where anything can happen as we saw, rather than playing a round-robin format against a number of teams, where consistency is rewarded.

I always believed that FIFA were the ones who decided this, so were the previous board completely crazy?

We could have received more revenue from home games but, most importantly, the Socceroos would have gained more experience, and we would have had more than one chance to qualify, as Iran, Japan and even Saudi Arabia had. Plus, don't forget, England topped their group in Europe even though Italy beat them at Wembley to make the aggregate score 1-0 over two legs.

Hopefully, we will all learn from the World Cup loss, and develop a better team in the long-term. Our best teams of the past — whether Senior, Olympic or Youth — have been our best prepared teams. Four years ago we were outclassed, but we were match hardened. This time we were beaten by the better team, without big match conditioning. In four years time we will have an even better side, and surely match hardened as well!!

All is not lost for the game, as some people believe, if we qualify for 2002, the whole country will be gripped by 'Soccer Fever'.

G Owen
Geelong, Vic.

Expert Johnny come latelies?

Dear Sir,

It's good to see so many people buying your publication and offering varied opinions.

I'm sure all followers of the World Game are disappointed on how our World Cup campaign ended.

My only gripe on the matter is that now that it is all over for Australia, we have all the experts giving advice on how it should have been done.

If these people knew what was going to happen they should have advised El Tel or David Hill before it happened.

We have missed out before and need to learn from all these experiences to better equip us for the next campaign.

Let's give credit to those involved, both players and administrators, for giving us an opportunity to compete on the world stage.

They gave their best and need our support to further enhance the game in this country.

Tim Diment,
Adamstown Heights, NSW

Letters continued on Page 14

Au Revoir

Dear Sir,

Terry Venables certainly likes the same players, plus a solid plan worked out in advance, which he expects the players to adhere to.

What he doesn't like, or seems unable to do, however, is make instantaneous or snap decisions!

In the European Championship semi-final, when in extra-time it was obvious where the game was headed — a penalty shootout — he would not introduce a few good penalty takers to the fray.

No, he lets the sixth penalty be taken by a relative novice, Gareth Southgate. The rest is history.

Against Iran, when we lead 2-0 and even at 2-1, he did not send on Milan Ivanovic, Josip Skoko and Ernie Tapai together, (Okon was not even on the bench), to replace Robbie Slater, Aurelio Vidmar and Craig Foster with the instructions to 'close down the game' or 'keep harassing the Iranians'.

He was just running up and down and was made to look silly. Well I for one hope it is goodbye to you Mr Venables!

R. Marton
St Marys, NSW

Editor's note:

Firstly I feel you are being slightly 'over the top' with your comments, but I'll certainly defend your right to say them. I think you will also find that Paul Okon was injured and unable to play, although, this was played down so as not to give the Iranians too much information too soon. It seems certain that Terry Venables will NOT be with Australia for very long given the opportunity to coach Nigeria in the France 98 World Cup Finals. Lastly, argue with the facts: Australia NEVER lost a game under Venables, the crowd got behind the side and we were unfortunate, not to say, perhaps, too naive, to be in France?

Bye tradition — hello progress

Dear Sir,

It was both sad and disappointing for Australian Soccer fans that they could not experience the joy and enthusiasm of cheering for the Socceroos in the World Cup Finals.

One thing is for sure, today's soccer demands the highest conditions in preparation of players and teams, technical skills etc.

One of the most important steps Soccer Australia should take is to choose a coach full-time, not part-time. Of course Terry Venables is a very good coach, but he has had limited time with the team.

At such a level, we just cannot afford mistakes. Good results come from a systematic coaching system that keeps abreast of changes, including scientific ones, and works hard at improving itself.

We have to say goodbye to tradition and hello to progress.

Jerzy Wrzos
Balgowlah, NSW

Final Analysis

Dear Sir,

On final analysis on the tragic exit of the Socceroos from the World Cup Finals, a lot of lessons need to be learned so that, hopefully, it won't be repeated again.

Before I go on, let me say that in no way were the players at fault, they gave it everything they had, but it didn't come off.

Looking at the contest over the two games, Iran were unlucky not to win at home by three goals and we were extremely unlucky not to win by five or six goals at home.

So overall we still deserved to get through, but didn't convert more chances into goals. Now the biggest problem I felt was we put to high an expectation, which creates a lot of pressure on our boys.

The Socceroos can get into a decent qualifying group of games against top Asian sides on a home-and-away basis over a six to eight month period, and not just a half a dozen 'Mickey Mouse' games against Pacific Island countries.

Coach El Tel should have known better, because that second goal by the Iranians should never have happened full stop.

The Australian public, and Soccer fans, should be aware of all the difficulties today for our senior Socceroos to try and qualify for the World Cup Finals every four years.

Dominic Scullino,
Helensburgh, Qld.

Rising Stars

National Youth League

Round 11

By Roy Hay

Southern Division:

Carlton suffered its first defeat of the season away to Gippsland Falcons on Saturday. Adrian Savage scored the only goal nine minutes into the second half, after a close and tightly fought game.

The Falcons have, like their seniors, proved to be a formidable force on their own ground and the win lifts them to equal top with Carlton and Melbourne Knights.

The Melbourne Knights had a comfortable five nil win over Bentleigh Greens on Friday. The first half saw Adis Kablar climb above the defence, so high that the ball went in off his shoulder, for the only goal of that half. Substitute Mathew Govic scored with his second touch in only his third game for the Knights, then man-of-the-match Daniel Radosevic made it three, before Govic scored again.

The final goal was a beauty as Hrvoje Matkovic ran on to a low cross from Mijo Trupkovic.

The VIS had a five-one away win over Bulleen Inter, which came at great cost with injuries to Billy Petrovski, Mustafa Mustafa and Joey Di Iorio. Petrovski opened the scoring for the VIS, but Bulleen equalised five minutes later through Eyhan Berkan. Then defender Serhat Hulusi came up to score again for the VIS. Not to be outdone, his fellow stopper Ljubo Milicevic came up to put away a header and striker Zoran Petrevski got the next one, before Boris Ovcin finished off the scoring avalanche.

Furthermore, Naum Sekulovski, one of the latest additions to the VIS squad, seems like a terrific prospect.

South Melbourne Rockets and Heidelberg United drew one-all at Bob Jane Stadium.

Northern Division:

Queensland Academy of Sport defeated Marconi Fairfield by three goals to nil on Saturday. After a scoreless and even first half, Royce Brownlie opened for the QAS on 58 minutes and Morgan Cawley and Aaron Thiesfield scored two quick goals in 62 and 65 minutes to settle the result.

Marconi Fairfield Colts took the lead against the NSW Institute of Sport through Galluzzo in 38 minutes, and they eventually won 2-1.

Mark Haggar scored just after the hour but a goal in the last minute by Derek Kane gave the Institute some reward for their contribution to an excellent game.

The ACT Academy of Sport and Newcastle Breakers could not be separated and the game ended goalless, though both sides had numerous shots on goal.

UTS Olympic Colts and Sydney United drew two-all with goals for Olympic by Philip Apostalidis and Sam Nizam.

UTS Olympic then overcame Sydney United Colts by three goals to nil. Jim Bakis put Olympic ahead early and Leo Carle scored from the spot early in the second half. Kevo Gulesserian completed the scoring for Olympic in 81 minutes.

In a postponed round one match, the AIS defeated Wollongong City by six goals to one. Mile Sterjovski collected another hat-trick, after Paul Tuturevski had put Wollongong ahead on four minutes. Ante Duer equalised then Mark Bresciano gave the AIS a two-one lead before the first of two Sterjovski goals. Vic Tomasevic got one just after the break and Sterjovski finished the scoring eight minutes from the bell.

SOUTHERN DIVISION RESULTS

Bent Greens	0	Melb Knights	5
Bulleen Inter	1	VIS	5
Gippsland F	1	Carlton	0
Sth Melb Rockets	1	Heidelberg Utd	1

NORTHERN DIVISION RESULTS

Marconi Fairfield	0	QAS	3
NSWIS	1	Marconi F Colts	2
UTS Oly Colts	2	Sydney Utd	2
ACTAS	0	Newcastle Breakers	0
AIS	6	Wollongong City	1
UTS Olympic	3	Sydney Utd Colts	0

SOUTHERN DIVISION TABLE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Melb Knights	9	7	0	2	36	11	21
Carlton	8	7	0	1	17	3	21
Gippsland F	8	7	0	1	14	5	21
VIS	8	5	0	3	20	12	15
Heidelberg	8	4	1	3	11	9	13
Bulleen Inter	7	3	1	3	9	12	10
Bent Greens	9	3	1	5	9	17	10
Sth Melb	8	1	2	5	11	16	5
A Magic	8	1	2	5	10	24	5
S M Rockets	7	1	1	5	7	30	4
A Wodonga	8	1	0	7	10	15	3

NORTHERN DIVISION TABLE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
AIS	10	7	2	1	49	10	23
QAS	11	5	4	2	29	14	19
UTS Oly	9	6	1	2	27	14	19
W'gong	9	5	2	2	22	17	17
ACTAS	10	4	3	3	13	24	15
Marc F	9	3	2	4	16	18	11
Newcastle	8	3	2	3	14	19	11
Marc Colts	9	3	2	4	13	20	11
Syd Utd	9	2	4	3	19	21	10
NSWIS	9	2	2	5	14	15	8
UTS Colts	9	2	1	6	12	29	7
S U Colts	8	0	1	7	1	28	1

ROUND 12 FIXTURES

SOUTHERN DIVISION

20/12 Altona Magic v Albury Wodonga (5.30 pm, Paisley Park)
VIS v Heidelberg United (4pm, Kim Reserve)
21/12 Sth Melb Rockets v Gippsland Falcons (5pm, Bob Jane Stadium)
Melb Knights v Bulleen Inter (3.30 pm, Knights Stadium)
22/12 Carlton v Sth Melbourne (5.30 pm, Optus Oval)

NORTHERN DIVISION

19/12 Syd United v Wollongong City (5pm, Parramatta Stadium)
Newcastle Breakers v UTS Olympic (5pm, Topper Stadium)
20/12 AIS v NSWIS (7pm, AIS Soccer Fields)
21/12 Marconi Colts v UTS Oly Colts (5pm, Marconi Stadium)
Syd Utd Colts v Marconi (5.30 pm, Sydney United Sports Stadium)

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN DIVISION

ROUND 7

Woodville City	4	Ad Hills	0
Ad Blue Eagles	17	Enfield City	1
Ad City	4	Mildura Yth Dev Sq	1
Ad Sharks	2	S A Sports Inst	3

STANDINGS

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ad City	7	6	1	0	32	8	19
Ad Sharks	7	5	0	2	30	9	15
Ad Blue Eag	6	3	2	1	34	12	11
SA Spt Ins	6	3	1	2	34	12	10
Woodville	6	3	0	3	20	10	9
Ad Hills	5	2	0	3	8	13	6
Mildura YDS	7	1	0	6	7	33	3
Enfield	6	0	0	6	1	53	0

ARNCLIFFE SCOTS S.C.

SECOND DIVISION TRIALS FOR 1998

FIRST GRADE
UNDER 21s
UNDER 18s
DATES: 14, 19, 21 December
WHERE: North Barton Park, West Botany Street
ARNCLIFFE
TIME: 9.00AM

For Further Information Contact Peter Veleski on 9519 3585 or 0411 333512

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02 9342 6179
0411 622 574

CAMDEN TIGERS SOCCER CLUB

STATE LEAGUE DIVISION 4

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Ron Dine Memorial Res, Cowper Drive, CAMDEN
6.30PM SHARP
All Enquiries: **Ian Lloyd (Head Coach)**
☎ **(02) 9606 5558**
David Cagney (Asst Coach)
☎ **(02) 4655 3119**

ERICSSON CUP

Match Reports

ANASTASIADIS SINKS PUMAS

SOUTH MELBOURNE.....3 SYDNEY UNITED.....0

By Dwyght Tuffnell

At Lakeside Stadium on Sunday a John Anastasiadis hat-trick ended Sydney United's unbeaten streak.

The former Greek based midfielder played up front with Con Boutsianis in a reshuffled Lakers side from last week's 4-0 defeat at Perth Glory.

South Melbourne supremo Angie Postecoglou dropped Bill Damianos and Vaughan Coveny while Michael Petkovic and Nick Orlic were missing through injury.

But Anastasiadis proved more than an adequate replacement up front, taking up some great positions and displaying some cool finishing.

"He has played up front before, but not often," said a happy Postecoglou after the game.

"I just think he's an experienced player who's played at the highest level in Europe and I believe he is a player who we can get a lot out of in the forward positions."

He gave South the lead in the 29th minute after the visitors had been well on top in the opening exchanges.

Boutsianis released Goran Lozanovski down the right hand side to swing in a cross for Anastasiadis to sweep past United keeper Andrew Crews.

Lozanovski was again involved in the second goal, feeding David Clarkson whose cross was missed by Crews, but not by the deadly Anastasiadis.

Coach David Mitchell and midfielder Marcus Phillips gave the Lakers real headaches for the entire game, but their teammates stayed largely anonymous.

Abbas Saad was one of them and he missed a golden opportunity to bring the Pumas back into the game just a minute after Souths' second goal.

Stuart Munro's cross was flicked back by Mitchell to Saad who, with only stand-in keeper Chris Jones to beat, headed over the bar.

Jones was in action again soon after, saving bravely at the feet of substitute Azur Mujanovic from a Mitchell cross.

In the 74th minute Anastasiadis completed his treble. A long ball out of the Lakers defence was missed by Joe Vrkic, and substitute Coveny raced towards goal and cut it back intelligently for Anastasiadis to score the easiest goal he's ever likely to score.

Coveny wasted a couple of great chances later in the game as South looked to really destroy United.

The Pumas did have a couple of opportunities themselves, both falling to Mujanovic.

First, he had a shot cleared off the line by Steve Iosifidis and then was denied by a terrific Jones save in the last minute.

"It was a good result, we played well and worked hard which was pleasing after last week's game.

"It took us a while to settle down, but the important thing is that they kept working hard and eventually started playing," added Postecoglou later.

John Anastasiadis: His hat-trick ended the Pumas' winning run.

SOUTH:
Jones, Iosifidis, De Amicis, Blatsis, Clarkson, Panopoulos (Damianos 46), Boutsianis (Coveny 67), Lozanovski, Baser, Anastasiadis (Curcija 76), Goutzioulis.

PUMAS: Crews, Barrett, Kupresak, Bennett, Vrkic, Munro (J.Culina 75), Burns (Galic 75), Bilokapic, Phillips, Mitchell, Saad (Mujanovic 66).

SCORERS:
Lakers: Anastasiadis 29, 57 & 74

CROWD: 6,000

POY
3 Anastasiadis (SM)
2 Lozanovski (SM)
1 Iosifidis (SM)

OLYMPIC DENT KNIGHTS' ARMOUR

UTS OLYMPIC.....2 MELBOURNE KNIGHTS.....1

By John Economos

UTS OLYMPIC got back on the winning trail last Sunday night when they defeated a luckless Melbourne Knights 2-1 at Belmore Sports Ground.

Adding to the Knights' woes referee Eddie Lennie sent-off experienced sweeper Alan Davidson .

With seconds left on the clock, substitute Ice Kutlesovski almost locked up the scoreline. Breaking through into the box, Kutlesovski strongly threatened to score with excellent skills, but Olympic's Angelo Petratos angled him wide before making a fabulous block-tackle on the by-line. Two early first half goals, rattled in by Eric Hristodoulou and Brett Emerton, lifted Olympic to a 2-0 lead inside 17 minutes.

But despite Olympic's first half dominance, it was the Knights that dominated proceedings.

Iin the 5th minute Damien Vojtek smashed a 30 metre drive well on target that Catlin did well to push up onto his cross-bar.

Referee, Lennie Eddie, in the 11th minute, penalised Knights goalkeeper Joe Didulica for holding the ball more than six seconds.

From the ensuing free kick Olympic's Walter Ardone rolled the ball square to Eric Hristodoulou, who cracked into the target a violent shot to draw first blood.

Six minutes later Brett Emerton doubled the home side's lead. A square ball fired in from the left by teenage left-back Hussein Jomaa, saw Emerton side foot a 'lifter' from close range.

Tommy Pondeljak shaved the base of the left post with a 25 metre screamer in the 24th minute, and poor finishing denied the Knights 'balancing the books' by half- time.

The Knights finally came back into the picture in the 64th minute with an excellent strike by substitute Kutlesovski. A cross fired in from the right was cleared by De Marigny, to the unmarked Kutlesovski who coolly side-footed home.

A long ball cleared out by Olympic's defence saw Davidson miss-kick, allowing striker Norman Tome to gather in and attempt to race off.

That's when a desperate Davidson committed his second mistake. Stranded by the mobile Tome, Davidson grabbed the Olympic player's shirt. Davidson was red-carded.

Ken Worden lamented later: "I'm not complaining about this red card (Davidson's) tonight, but in our last four games, three of them we have finished the match with ten men, just as we looked like making a strong comeback."

UTS coach Geoff Harcombe reflected: "I think we are now on the right track. When we were up 2-0 we were a little shell-shocked as we have never been in that position before, but we tightened up in the second half and in fact could have had another two or three."

So Olympic's return to Belmore, from the SFS, has begun on a happy note.

Joe Didulica: A superb performance but it was Olympic that took the three points. (pic courtesy of Sports West Media)

OLYMPIC: Catlin, Carter (Petratos 34), Juric, De Marigny, Jomma, Emerton, Tsekenis, Ardone, Hristodoulou, Augerinos (Eagleton 70), Tome

KNIGHTS: Joe Didulica, Kovacevic (Nastevski 46), Banini, Davidson, Rajmer, Deak, Marth, John Didulica, Vojtek (Kutlesovski 58), Pondeljak, Kelic.

SCORERS:
Olympic: Hristodoulou 11, Emerton 17
Knights: Kutlesovski 64

CROWD: 4,821.

POY
3 Joe Didulica (MK)
2 Ardone (SO)
1 Petratos (SO)

GLORY RAVAGED BY WOLF PACK

PERTH GLORY.....0 WOLLONGONG WOLVES.....3

By Richard Kreider

Perth Glory suffered one of its most comprehensive defeats in their short history last Sunday night when they were overwhelmed by a no-nonsense Wollongong City in front of 15,080 fans at Perth Oval.

To make matters worse, midway through the second-half Glory had Bobby Despotovski sent-off for a second bookable offence. Likewise, referee Louis Prospero pointed Wolves defender Jason Connolly towards the dressing room one minute from time after a heated confrontation with Scott Miller.

The 3-0 scoreline more than flattered a Perth side that struggled to contain the well drilled visitors for the majority of the match.

"With no disrespect to Gary Marocchi, we were a good six or seven goal side today," said a confident Wolves coach Nick Theodorakopoulos, who was understandably ecstatic about his team's performance, one he believes eclipses the 8-0 thrashing of Canberra the previous week.

"We took a gamble playing with three strikers, and it paid off," he said. "This game reminded me of the loss we had at home against Newcastle Breakers last season," said a dejected Glory captain Gareth Naven.

Perth coach Gary Marocchi continued: "Our final ball passing, commitment and discipline was non-existent," he said.

"I am at a loss as to how we can play so well last week and perform so poorly this week," he stated to ABSW.

Marocchi now has to rebuild his side for next weekend's game against Canberra Cosmos without four or five of his star players.

Paul Strudwick is already sidelined with a long-term knee injury. Despotovski is automatically suspended after his red card offence, plus Vinko Buljubasic and Scott Miller may also be missing after each received their fourth yellow card.

For Miller, his suspension will be a significant blow as he has been ever present in their side this term, indeed, he is the only Perth player to have featured in EVERY game since Glory began playing in the Ericsson Cup in October 1996.

Apart from the two red cards, nine of the yellow variety were also dished out in a spiteful game.

After Miller gave the Wolves defence a fright, the visitors responded with dramatic effect by taking a stranglehold on the rest of the match.

Tony Perinich, Esala Masi, Michael Reda, Scott Chipperfield, Matt Horsley and Alvin Ceccoli all had strong chances to score in the first half, only to be denied by wayward shooting or quality goalkeeping by Tony Maras.

The home side were forced to bring stopper Peter Vukmirovic in for the start of the second half, after Buljubasic received a strain to his right thigh. The side suffered another blow in the 58th minute when Carbone hobbled off, to be replaced by Doug Ithier

Tragically, both Buljubasic and Carbone were the Glory's best players up until their forced exits.

Wolves subsequently broke the deadlock in the 60th minute through Tony Perinich, who forced home a left side centre past Maras.

His intimidatory celebrations in front of the Hill, however, alongside many of his teammates, earned him a yellow card.

Wollongong continued their assault and made it 2-0 six minutes later with a diving header from Anthony Surjan.

The lethal Scott Chipperfield, who scored four last week, provided the coup de grace for Glory with his first, and Wollongong's third, four minutes from time.

GLORY: Maras, Wilkinson, Buljubasic (Vukmirovic 46), G.Naven, Miller, McVittie (Anosike 62), Despotovski, Siasia, Halpin, Day, Carbone (Ithier 58).
WOLVES: Broadbeck, Ceccoli, Stanton, Connolly, Horsley, Surjan (Spencer 68), Reda (Huxley 75), Chipperfield, Souris, Perinich (Dimoski 89), Masi.
SCORERS:
Wolves: Perinich 60, Surjan 66, Chipperfield 86

CROWD: 15,080
POY
3 Ceccoli (WC)
2 Chipperfield (WC)
1 Perinich (WC)

ERICSSON CUP

Results Round Eleven

South Melbourne	3	Sydney United	0	Perth Glory	0	Wollongong City	3
UTS Olympic	2	Melbourne Knights	1	Marconi Fairfield	1	Brisbane Strikers	0
Canberra Cosmos	1	Newcastle Breakers	1	Gippsland Falcons	0	Carlton	0

Adelaide Sharks v Adelaide City (Postponed to January 14, 1998)

Round Twelve Fixtures

Odds courtesy of SportOdds

FRIDAY DECEMBER 19

Newcastle	Draw	UTS Olympic
2.50	3.20	2.50

SATURDAY DECEMBER 20

Sydney United	Draw	Wollongong
2.50	3.20	2.50
Brisbane	Draw	Adelaide Sharks
2.50	3.20	2.50

SUNDAY DECEMBER 21

Carlton	Draw	South Melbourne
3.25	3.25	1.80
Melbourne Knights	Draw	Marconi Fairfield
1.65	3.25	4.50
Adelaide City	Draw	Gippsland Falcons
1.45	3.50	4.50
Perth Glory	Draw	Canberra
1.45	3.75	8.00

ERICSSON CUP LEADING SCORERS

10 Pablo Cardozo	**Adelaide Sharks**
10 Scott Chipperfield	**Wollongong City**
6 Damian Mori	Adelaide City
5 David Mitchell	Sydney United
5 Abbas Saad	Sydney United
5 Anthony Surjan	Wollongong City
5 Tom Pondeljak	Melbourne Knights
5 Claytone Zane	Newcastle Breakers
5 Bob Despotovski	Perth Glory
4 Paul Trimboli	South Melbourne
4 Norman Tome	UTS Olympic
4 Brad Maloney	Marconi Fairfield

ERICSSON CUP TABLE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sydney United	11	6	4	1	17	9	22
Sth Melbourne	11	5	5	1	24	15	20
Carlton	11	5	5	1	14	8	20
Perth Glory	11	6	1	4	18	18	19
Wollongong City	10	5	1	4	25	10	16
Adelaide City	7	5	0	2	14	7	15
Adelaide Sharks	10	4	2	4	17	17	14
Marconi Fairfield	11	4	2	5	11	17	14
Melbourne Knights	10	3	4	3	14	12	13
UTS Olympic	11	4	1	6	10	15	13
Gippsland Falcons	11	2	5	4	6	11	11
Brisbane Strikers	10	3	0	7	7	13	9
Newcastle Breakers	10	1	4	5	11	18	7
Canberra Cosmos	11	1	4	6	8	25	7

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Round 12 Preview

By Stuart Jones

Newcastle v UTS Olympic
Having only gained one point from a possible six in their last two home games this one is very important for the Breakers.

Olympic became the first victims of Brisbane at Suncorp Stadium this season on their last road trip. Of course in 1979, this clash drew 18,367, a record for a league fixture that stayed unbroken for some time. Newcastle won 4-3 last year and it could be another goal fest this time around.

Prediction: Draw

Sydney United v Wollongong
A very big game and United will be out to gain full points at home after dropping points to Gippsland two weeks ago. This game ended 3-3 last season, whilst in Wollongong, the Pumas won 4-1. Perhaps another 5 or 6 goals would bring back the crowds?

Prediction: Draw

Brisbane v Adelaide Sharks
After their last home win the Strikers need to collect all the remaining home points to rise like a phoenix up the table.

With Pablo Cardozo up front the Sharks will be looking to snatch all three points. Last season this was another high scoring affair with the Strikers winning 3-2. However the clash in Adelaide ended goalless.

Prediction: Sharks

Carlton v South Melbourne
A huge clash, Carlton will look to rebuild from home, whilst South Melbourne's last road trip - albeit a lot bigger one to Perth, ended in disaster. The Melbourne public want big games, well they won't get much bigger than this one.

Prediction: Carlton

Melbourne Knights v Marconi
The Knights are always difficult at home and Marconi are going to find this away trip as difficult as they have found most of their recent ones. Saying all that, last season's scoreline finished 2-1 to the Stallions. How hard is it to predict a result on this one? The Knights won 1-0 at Marconi Stadium in the same season!

Prediction: Knights

Adelaide City v Gippsland
Gippsland have proved to the doubters they can gain points away from home and are out to add another big gun to that list.

Hindsmarsh Stadium hosts its second match of the season, last year the locals saw City win comfortably, 4-1. However, back in Victoria it was a different tune as the Falcons won 2-0.

Prediction: Adelaide City

Perth v Canberra
Not too many games Canberra play in these days draw crowds over 10,000, but this will surely be one. Former Glory player Dale Wingell is in the ranks of the Cosmos.

Perth put six unanswered goals past the Cosmos last year. Canberra put four back with a single reply, at Bruce Stadium, to gain some revenge.

Prediction: Perth Glory

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ERICSSON CUP

Match Reports

KIM'S CLASS BLUNTS STRIKERS

MARCONI FAIRFIELD .....1 BRISBANE STRIKERS.....0

By John Economos

Marconi, last Saturday night at home, struggled to defeat a luckless Brisbane Strikers 1-0, in a match that offered little entertainment for the 4,027 crowd.

The Stallions opened the score when captain and central midfielder Brad Maloney headed into the target after playmaker, Gabriel Mendez, sprayed wide to the right for Vlado Zoric to cross into the box.

An agricultural tackle by a Brisbane player left Marconi midfielder Darren McDonald lame in the 28th minute, he was forced to be carried from the pitch and be replaced by youngster Christian Care.

Marconi, in the 33rd minute, were saved by their 22-year old lanky goalkeeper, Ante Covic.

Covic made an unbelievable save from a soft shot by Brisbane's experienced striker and equal record holder, Rod Brown.

Frank Farina clipped a ball back off the by-line into the six-yard box to find Brown in a point blank situation and with Covic well out of position. Just as Brown tapped a soft shot toward the empty net, Covic unbelievably scrambled back to gather centimetres off the goal-line.

Three minutes after the break, a long cross from the left by Marconi substitute Care, found right wing-back Luke Casserly, on the far post. Casserly crossed back into the box to find striker Sean Babic, who blasted into goalkeeper Clint Bolton.

Brisbane stung back in the 63rd minute when industrious midfielder Chay Hews fired, from 30 metres out, a free-kick that cannoned off the base of the right post.

Six-minutes later, Sean Babic cut back from the left a fabulous ball, but playmaker Mendez's screamer sailed narrowly wide of the right post.

Marconi, for the bulk of the second session, withdrew into a totally defensive mode, determined to preserve their slender lead to ensure their three league points, which made life absolutely difficult for their solitary and pacey striker, Zeljko Babic.

Marconi's lanky physical target man, Francis Awaritefe, again failed to start the match, still suffering from a damaged quad thigh muscle and his absence over the past few weeks has been severely missed by his team.

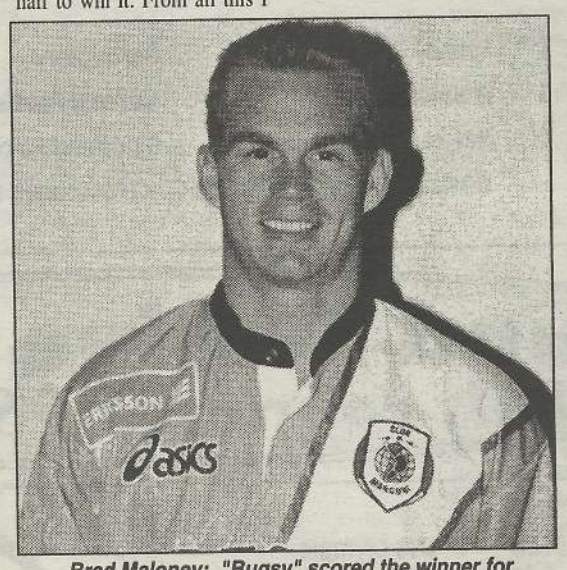
Marconi's newly signed South Korean double World Cup sweeper Pan-Keun Kim (1990 & 1994), despite this being his first outing, showed glimpses of brilliance with his quick thinking and it was surprising that, despite, diminutive stature, was able to climb and dominate totally all aerial duels.

A relieved Marconi coach, Zoran Matic, reflected after the game: "We need points badly, but we need more points. I'm happy with what I saw of my new sweeper. He is a real player.

"I'm certain he'll be here for more than the original six weeks because he thinks quick and has a real soccer brain. Every game has been a struggle for us."

Meanwhile, Brisbane's coach and former World Cup striker, Frank Farina, as always, raw with his honesty, later lamented: "They scored from their first cross. We had enough chances in the second half to win it. From all this I believe Marconi didn't do enough to create opportunities.

"Too many players from my side are out of form and we are just not scoring. We had at least six chances that didn't hit the target."



Brad Maloney: "Bugsy" scored the winner for Marconi.

MARCONI: Covic, Casserly, M.Babic, Pan Keun Kim, Longo, Renaud, Maloney, Mendez, McDonald (Care 28), Zoric, S.Babic (Tomich 90).

STRIKERS: Bolton, Zoricich, Gwynne, Laybutt, S.Cranney (Knipe 74), Hews (Battistin 80), Packer (Meredith 60), T.Cranney, Brown, Harper, Farina.

SCORER:
Marconi: Maloney 24

CROWD: 4,027

POY
3 Mendez (MF)
2 Brown (BS)
1 Covic (MF)

COSMOS MISS OUT AGAIN

CANBERRA COSMOS.....1 NEWCASTLE BREAKERS 1

By Nick Guoth

The Prime Minister's Cup remained in the hands of both Canberra and Newcastle as they shared the points in a tough struggle in which both sides were left to rue profligate finishing.

Canberra should have taken the game easily but for the number of missed chances in both halves. The lack of a goal scoring attacker has been the Cosmos' bane this year, and again it showed in this match.

Only a quarter of an hour gone and the locals could have been one up. Ante Moric walked through some rather feeble defence, rounded the keeper and instead of taking a shot with his right foot, layed the ball back to Ivan Zelic. His shot ballooned well over the crossbar.

From the ensuing goalkick the younger brother of Ned Zelic rose high to head the ball forward to an unmarked Harry James, but the ex-Breaker rushed his shot and watched as it just passed the wrong side of the upright.

James had another chance when a poor pass by Matthew Austin became a gift to his former teammate, but James, with an open goal, missed completely.

It wasn't all Canberra as Peter Ritchie had a golden chance when he was put through by Breakers striker Clayton Zane. Unfortunately he kicked the ground more than the ball and it rolled slowly to Barney Smith in goal.

The visitors' Jason Bennett tried hard for his team during this half and was nearly rewarded when his shot went across the face of the goal.

Only seconds from the break a free-kick to Canberra just outside the penalty area saw Canberra perform to perfection another set move. Zelic pushed the ball into the path of Moric and his thunderbolt saw nothing but the back of the net for a marvellous goal.

The second half was laced with rare chances as the Cosmos tried to consolidate and hold their precious lead.

Breakers' Troy Halpin, prior to being replaced, saw a few good chances go wide and big Clayton Zane came close although his shot was blocked on the line by Toplica Popovich.

Ilja Prenzoski probably had the best opportunity to score prior to the equaliser when he beat Brad Swancott to the ball and his chip was heading towards the goal. Newcastle's Todd McManus came from nowhere to clear off the line and send the ball to the safety of the stands.

Then with less than five minutes left a goalmouth scramble developed in the Cosmos six-yard area. With the ball not cleared, late substitute Liam McGuire was able to get to the loose ball and push it over the line to break the hearts of the locals.

Canberra had a brief chance to grab back the lead in the dying seconds after a Moric corner was headed on by Lindsay Wilson — Dale Wingell tried an overhead kick but it didn't find joy and with it went Canberra's chance of moving up the table.

Breakers' coach John Kosmina said he was happy to get the point, and that "the boys showed good composure tonight". He was very pleased with the performance of Robbie Ironside in defence.

Branko Culina, on the other hand, was not enthused with his team's performance and stated "We have to learn to score goals and defend the lead." Too right Branko.

COSMOS: Smith, Dee, Roberts, Zelic (Popovich 63), Moric, Hunter, Kelly, James (Prenzoski 69), Wilson, Haythornwaite, Brown (Wingell 77)

BREAKERS: Swancott, Austin, McManus, Ironside, Ritchie, Wilson, Zane, Halpin (Sprod 73), Bennett, Edwards, Lowe (McGuire 83)

SCORERS:
Canberra: Moric 45
Breakers: McGuire 87

CROWD: 1,573

POY
3 Hunter (CC)
2 Zane (NB)
1 Wilson (CC)

KING JIM SAVES AROK'S WONDERS

GIPPSLAND FALCONS.....0 CARLTON 0

By Damian Tripodi

In an exciting and heart stopping match at Falcons Park, Carlton and Gippsland Falcons earned one point each in a 0-0 draw in front of an encouraging 4,123 spectators.

Despite rain and a slippery pitch, the match was entertaining and flowing.

The Falcons again played with their noted passion, good teamwork and fighting spirit which saw them either defeat or draw with the three top teams in three consecutive weeks.

Gippsland coach, the clever Frank Arok, stated after the game that looking at the Falcons' statistics over the past five weeks and those of the other Victorian sides, the Falcons are currently "the best team in Victoria"! Typical hype from one of the wiliest characters around.

Both sides had a fairly even number of chances, however neither was able to capitalise. In the early stages of the game the famed solid Falcons defence was not in evidence and often it was up to the brilliance of Jim Kourtis in goals to save the day.

Brian MacNicol served the ball to Archie Thompson who sent it wide of the goal in the game's first real chance.

Three minutes later and poor communication between Claudio Canosa and Lev Osman allowed Carlton's Mark Atkinson to break through, but with cat-like reflexes Kourtis deflected the ball away for a corner kick.

Carlton maintained the pressure and on 12 minutes Vince Grella's free-kick ballooned over the defensive wall — again Kourtis brilliantly got one hand to the ball to flick it over the bar.

Two minutes later it was the Gippslanders' turn to show some class of their own. Brian MacNicol's low cross coming from the left of goal was taken by Zlatko Mihaljovic who turned and sent a solid shot from close-up, forcing the Carlton goal keeper Dean Anastasiadis to execute a brilliant full length diving save.

Another chance went begging for the home side on the 37th minute following a one-two between Mihaljovic and Will Hastie — they set-up Thompson, but Anastasiadis beat the exciting youngster to the ball.

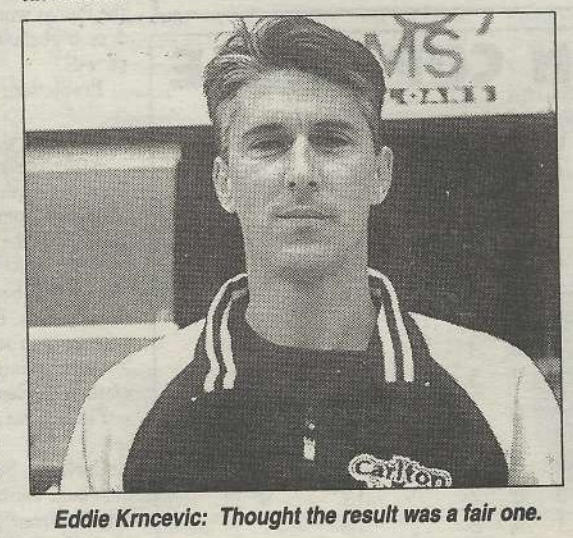
Early in the second half the Falcons appeared to raise a notch and took command of proceedings. An excellent solo effort by Archie Thompson on 48 minutes was once again denied by Anastasiadis, who managed to send the ball over the bar.

The game's most decisive moment came on 53 minutes. A hotly disputed penalty was awarded to Carlton (the ensuing Kourtis protest earned a yellow card), however the brilliant custodian saved Lubo Lapsansky's effort.

The Falcons lacked fortune in the final minutes of the game when Mihaljovic's shot rebounded off the post into the arms of Anastasiadis.

"On the basis of chances we deserved to win. It was an exciting game, very open, anything could have happened. We are not disheartened because we have now either beaten or have drawn against the three top teams in the competition," said a proud Arok.

Once again the Falcons have shown that despite an uncertain club future, the players' and coach's minds are on the job.



Eddie Krncevic: Thought the result was a fair one.

FALCONS: Kourtis, Canosa, Bell, Gotis, Marcina (Hutchinson 80), Foy (Mitroulas 66) MacNicol (Byrne 80), Osman, Hastie, Mihajlovic.

BLUES: Anastasiadis, Trajkovski (Cervinski 56), Stergiopoulos (Grbac 90), Douglas, Anthopoulos, Lapsansky, Vlahos (Allsop 73), Colosimo, Grella, Bacak, Atkinson.

CROWD: 4,123

POY
3 Kourtis (GF)
2 Bacak (C)
1 Gotis (GF)

Malaysia Calling....

BY JOHN ECONOMOS

MEHMET DURAKOVIC, former Australian World Cup defender, this Saturday will proudly lead his star-studded Selangor team out onto the lush pitch of the huge (see back page) three year old monster Shah Alam Stadium in Selangor, Malaysia.

The event?

Malaysia's most prestigious Soccer event, the Malaysia Cup Final.

Challenging Selangor will be Pahang.

Last Saturday night Pahang in their second leg of the semi final, again defeated Brian Bothwell's Brunei 1-3, (first leg 3-2).

Last Saturday in their second leg of the semi against a gallant Perlis, and in front of an away crowd of 35,000, the powerful Selangor again were victorious 0-2 (first leg 2-0).

The scorers for the 'Red Giants' last Saturday night were Shahril Arsat and Azman Adnan.

Selangor's well respected captain Durakovic informed ABSW last night: "This Saturday night our team will be fighting for its 28th Malaysian Cup.

"For me personally, it will be my third consecutive year in the Cup Final with Selangor.

"The last two years Selangor have been victorious and I would dearly love to achieve my hat-trick of Cup medals."

The durable Durakovic told ABSW that, already, the entire Stadium has been sold out for Saturday's mega-event, no less than 84,000 tickets have been snapped up since last Saturday.

"Selangor has been rated as the 'Manchester United' of Soccer in Malaysia. It is a powerful club that boasts no less than 54 professional players on their books.

"There is our senior team, the Reserves, the Youth team as well as the Academy team. All full-time players.

"With our new English coach, Steve Wicks, all the players have taken to him eagerly.

"He has excellent knowledge as well as excellent man-management skills and a great motivator," ended the captain.

❑❑❑

STEVE WICKS, the former Chelsea centre-back, in his first season as head coach of Selangor, bravely took the giant step at the beginning of the Malaysian season to upgrade no less than seven youngsters into the first squad.

Aged 41, Wicks, whose professional career in England stretched from 1974 to 1988 as a defender with Chelsea, Derby, QPR and Crystal Palace, stated to ABSW: "I have coached at Portsmouth, Scarborough, Lincoln City and Singapore."

When ABSW questioned the Selangor coach as to who were some of the best players he's played with or against, Wicks answered: "Bobby Moore by far was the best.

"I have also played with such Chelsea greats as Peter Osgood and Charlie Cook."

Just what does Malaysia have to do to be able to compete as a power in Asian Soccer?

"Malaysia must become fully professional in all aspects, including administration. The game here is based on voluntary workers largely.

"The potential is definitely here. There is just so much still to learn.

"Look what the Japanese have done in recent years with the J-League. That's why they have been able to qualify for the World Cup Finals next year.

"The Selangor players are a real joy to work with. I'm pleased with all my young players and now we are in the Cup Final on Saturday night.

"I've said all along that whoever beats us will have to work real hard to do so. Our team spirit is great. I couldn't wish for more.

"Sure it was risky bringing in youngsters, but you have to have pace. If you've got genuine mobility up front you are going to cause problems for people.

"Semi-Finals are always pressure games and the odd goal usually wins them."

Mehmet Durakovic: Selangor's captain.

Wicks who has a 19-year old son (Matthew), a centre-back on the books at Arsenal, is most ambitious and has expressed his desire to one day come to Australia to coach.

"I have worked with Terry Venables in years gone by. "He's an excellent coach. I was under him as a player and he always knew so much about the opposition. This information he'd pass on to his players which would instil so much more confidence in our team.

The articulate Wicks will be hopeful that his young Selangor side, on Saturday night, will be able to retain the most prestigious Malaysia Cup again, safely locked up in their trophy room where it has been for the last two consecutive years.

❑❑❑

Steve Wicks: Selangor's new English coach.

ALAN VEST this season guided Sarawak to its first League championship in the Malaysian Soccer League.

Vest first went to Malaysia seven years ago and took over Sarawak in the second division. Within the first year, Vest gained promotion into the first division.

In reality one could honestly say that it was Vest's tenacious and diligent guidance that pioneered Sarawak into the professional ranks of Malaysian Soccer.

Today, despite having seen no less than 58 summers, Vest still is a track-suit manager and engages in training games.

Standing in centre-pitch, he still today constantly knocks balls into space, pressuring his squad players to run onto.

Malaysians are notorious for playing to feet.

"It has been a long battle over the years but it has all been worthwhile and this year we were rewarded with the Championship," stated Vest.

The former New Zealand World Cup midfielder and former coach of Newcastle K.B. in the early years of the NSL, Vest is based in Kuching, the rapidly growing capital city of Sarawak that has a population of 400,000.

❑❑❑

Alan Vest: Malaysia's missionary of professional Soccer.

RONNIE SMITH, coach of Sabah, won the League championship in his first year in Malaysia last year.

This year Sabah finished in third spot.

"We were runners up in the Malaysia Cup to Selangor last year as we lost in a penalty shoot-out," stated Smith.

This year Smith's Sabah beat the League Champions of Singapore, Geylang, 0-1 away.

Despite finishing in third spot this season in the League, Smith led the Championship for 90% of the season before succumbing to a long string of injuries to his squad.

Even with just seven matches left they led the league by three points before his team collapsed.

Sabah, which boasts dynamic Australian striker Scott Ollerenshaw, won 14 games drew seven and then lost seven.

"Malaysian Soccer has a lot of positives going for it," he added.

"There's a huge coverage by the media, large crowds, plenty of finance through rich sponsorships. But it will take time before it fully develops from the ground up to top class level," ended the former Head Coach at Canberra's A.I.S.

Ronnie Smith: Coaching Sabah in Malaysia.

MALAYSIAN NATIONA

Scott Ollerenshaw

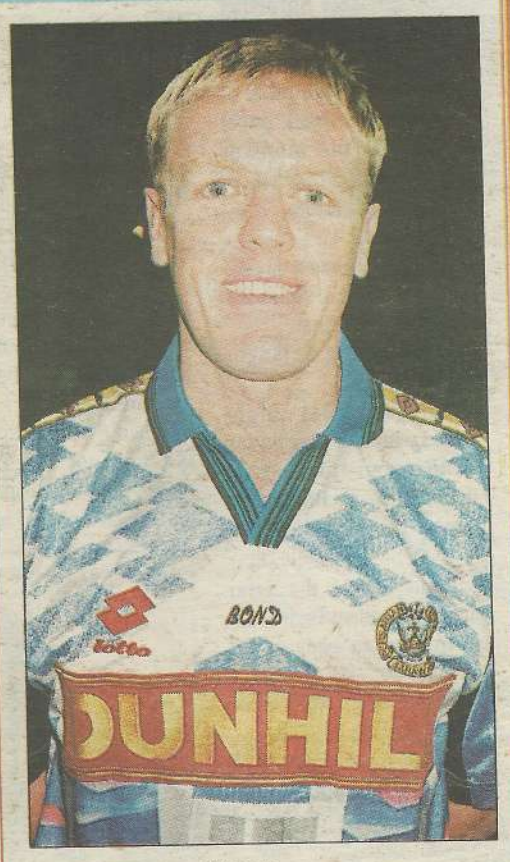
Date Of Birth: 9/2/68
Birthplace: Sydney
Previous Clubs: St George
Current Club: Sabah
Current Position: Central Striker
Nickname: 'Ollie'
Marital Status: Married to Michelle
Occupation: Full-time Soccer player
Best Aspect Of Your Game: Courage, pace, finishing.
Most Difficult Opponent: Mehmet Durakovic (Selangor)
Most Impressive Local Player: Paul Trimboli
Favourite Overseas Player: Ian Wright (Arsenal)
Favourite Overseas Club: Arsenal
What Qualities Make For A Good Coach: The ability to communicate, patience and be strong in adversity
Honours: World Youth '86, Seoul Olympics '88, 18 Caps
Ambitions For 1998: To win the Malaysian Cup with Sabah
Ambitions After Retiring: To get my golf handicap down to zero
Most Memorable Moment: Gold Cup '88 vs Brazil, Malaysian Cup Final '96 vs Selangor in front of 80,000 crowd
Hobbies: Golf and reading novels
Best Goal You've Seen Scored: Ronaldo's for Barcelona last year
Favourite Food: Pasta
Favourite Drink: VB
Car: Proton Saga
Favourite TV Show: Chicago Hope and Footy Show
Least favourite TV: Soapies
Favourite Movie: Airforce One
Favourite Actor-Actress: Harrison Ford, Richard Gere and Demi Moore
Preferred Music: Anything at all
Least Preferred Music: 50s or 60s
Favourite Comedian: Kevin 'Bloody' Wilson
Pet Hates: Unfactual statements
Special Advice To Young Players: Have role models like a Farina or an Okon-never look too far ahead
Person You Would Like To Meet: John McEnroe

Alan Vest, 58, the former New Zealand World Cup midfielder, this year coached club side Sarawak to win its first ever Championship. This well-respected former coach of Newcastle K.B. and the former NSW Director of Coaching NSW, has been in charge at Sarawak as manager/coach for seven consecutive years.

Ronnie Smith, former head coach at AIS in Canberra, coached club Sabah this year with great success. Sabah finished third in the League this season.

John Economos seen here on pitch of the Shah Alam, home ground of Malaysia's Selangor. It holds 84,000, all seated and under cover. A superb stadium.

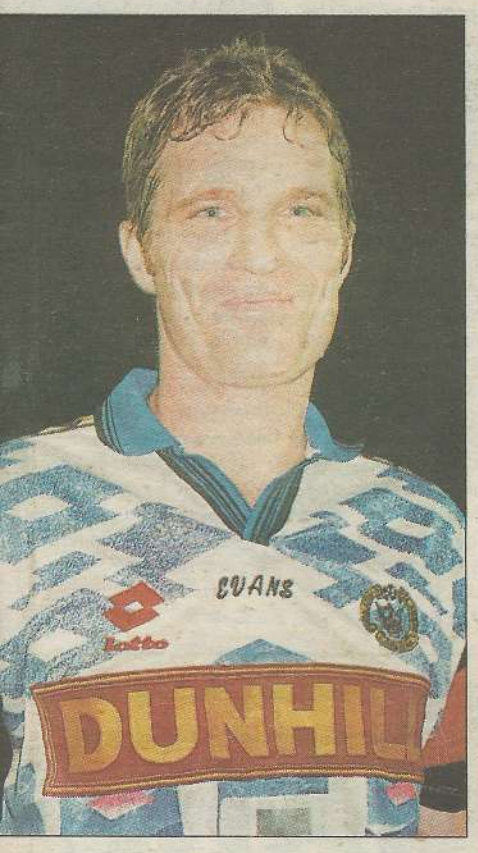
Billy Bone



Date Of Birth: 4/10/71
Birthplace: Newcastle, England
Previous Clubs: Sunderland, Sing Tao (Hong Kong), Sembawang Rangers (Singapore)
Current Club: Sarawak-Malaysia
Current Position: Central midfielder
Nickname: 'Geordie'
Marital Status: Married to Elizabeth
Occupation: Full-time soccer player
Best Aspect Of Your Game: Passing, ball-winner, aggression, vision
Most Difficult Opponent: Alan Devonshire (West Ham), Jurgen Klinsmann (Spurs)
Most Impressive Local Player: Nazri-Yunos (Sarawak)
Favourite Overseas Player: Paul Gascoigne, Bryan Robson
Favourite Overseas Club: Sunderland
What Qualities Make For A Good Coach: Good communicator, man-mangement skills and sound coaching knowledge
Honours: Sunderland Youth Champions '88, Malaysian League Champions '97
Ambitions For 1998: To win more silver-ware with Sarawak
Ambitions After Retiring: To stay in game in some capacity
Most Memorable Moment: Signing with Sunderland, winning '97 League Championship with Sarawak
Hobbies Outside Soccer: Relaxing with my wife Elizabeth
Best Goal You've Seen Scored: Maradona's vs England in '86 World Cup and Gascoigne's Euro '96 vs Scotland
Favourite Food: Pasta.
Favourite Drink: Gatorade and white wine
Car You Drive: Honda Accord
Favourite TV Show: Match Of The Day, Only Fools and Horses
Least favourite TV: Coronation Street
Favourite Movie: Seven, Sleepers
Favourite Actor-Actress: Robert Redford, Brad Pitt and Michelle Pfieffer
Preferred Music: Oasis
Least Preferred Music: Heavy Metal.
Favourite Comedian: Billy Connelly
Pet Hates: Smoking
Biggest Influence In My Career: My Dad
Special Advice To Young Players: Work hard and be dedicated always
Person You Would Like To Meet: Pele, Beckenbauer

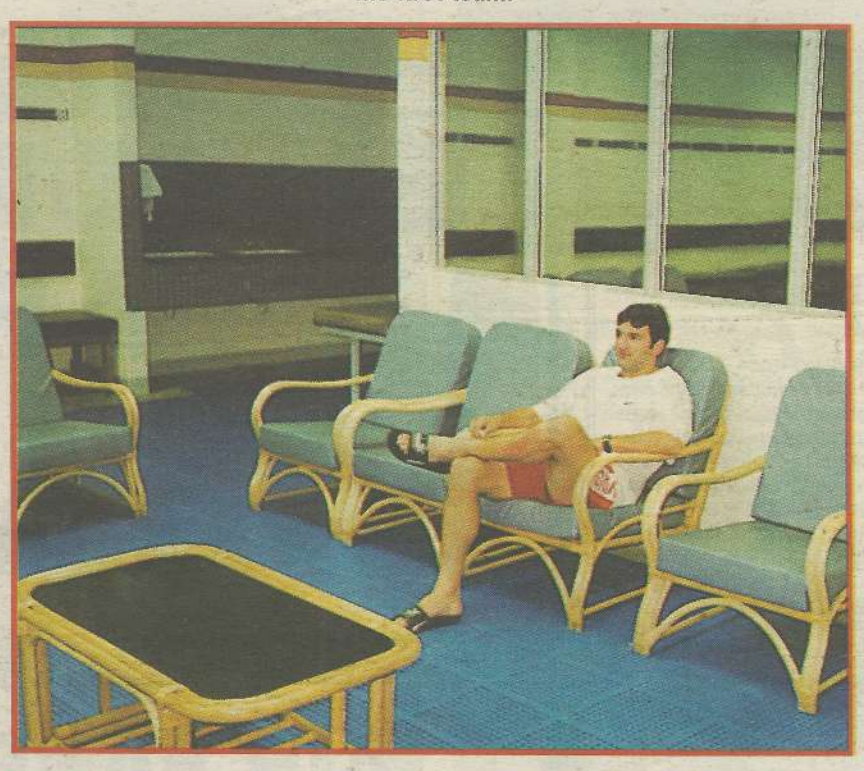
AL SOCCER LEAGUE

Dave Evans



ate Of Birth: 23/6/64
irthplace: Liverpool, England
revious Clubs: Rockingham (Perth), pearwood, Athena Floreat, Perth Italia
urrent Club: Sarawak
urrent Position: Centre-back or sweeper
ickname: 'Archie'
arital Status: Single
ccupation: Full-time Soccer player
est Aspect Of Your Game: Heading, ttitude, team-player, competitive
ost Difficult Opponent: Ollerenshaw, eddy Sheringham, Robbie Dunn
ost Impressive Local Player: Nazri unos (Sarawak), Trimboli, Lazaridis
avourite Overseas Player: Dalglish, ush
avourite Overseas Club: Liverpool
hat Qualities Make For A Good Coach: is communication abilities to get across ll his points and possess a sound knowldge of game
onours: Ten caps with W.A. State team, nder 13s W.A.
mbitions For 1998: To win the Malaysian up and finish as high as possible in alaysian League with Sarawak
mbitions After Retiring: A good quesion-unknown at the moment
ost Memorable Moment: Winning the alaysian League this year and Malaysian .A. Cup in '92, all with Sarawak
obbies Outside Soccer: Reading books, oing to 'Memories' (Coffee Lounge in uching) and listening to Oasis
est Goal You've Seen Scored: Free-kick y Roberto Carlos
avourite Food: Pasta
avourite Drink: Caffe Latte, pineapple ice and the odd Corona
ar You Drive: Honda Accord
avourite T.V.Show: X-Files
east favourite TV: Soapies
avourite Movie: Highlander, Dances ith Wolves, Pulp Fiction
avourite Actor-Actress: John Travolta, evin Costner, Michelle Pfieffer
referred Music: Oasis
east Preferred Music: Dance and Rap
avourite Comedian: Terry King
et Hates: Cheats, injuries and ignorance
pecial Advice To Young Players: Work ard even when not in the team. Practice eriously and be ambitious

Steve Wicks, 41, former Chelsea centre-back and currently boss at Selangor, will be shooting for his first Malaysia Cup Final success this Saturday at the Shah Alam. Since taking over has played seven U/20s in his first team.



Mehmet Durakovic, captain of Selangor, relaxing in the players' lounge at the Shah Alam stadium. Hopes to lead Selangor to its 28th Malaysia Cup Final win. If he does, he will achieve a hat-trick of Malaysia Cups, all in just three years.

The awesome Shah Alam stadium, where 63,000 delirious fans witnessed Selangor's 2-0 win over visiting Perlis in the semi-final of the Malaysia Cup last week.

Mehmet Durakovic

Date Of Birth: 13/10/65
Birthplace: . Montenegro (Yugoslavia)
Previous Clubs: Brunswick-Juventus, Footscray, South Melbourne
Current Club: Selangor
Current Position: Central marker or sweeper
Nickname: 'Mehm'
Marital Status: Married to Zumreta (with two girls, Jasmina and Adriana)
Occupation: Full-time Soccer player
Best Aspect Of Your Game: Work rate, tight marker, reading the game
Most Difficult Opponent: Lineker, Papin, Viduka
Most Impressive Local Player: Trimboli, Petersen, Muscat, Boutsianis, Tsolakis
Favourite Overseas Player: Maldini, Shearer
Favourite Overseas Club: Inter Milan
What Qualities Make For A Good Coach: Well respected, with communication skills and good knowledge of Soccer.
Honours: League championships Brunswick Juventus '85, South Melbourne '91, Malaysian Cup Finals ('96 '97)
Ambitions For 1998: To win League and Cup with Selangor, and Socceroo recall.
Ambitions After Retiring: Coaching
Most Memorable Moment: Winning League championship with Brunswick and Souths, scoring World Cup qualifier goal against Canada '93 and winning two Malaysian Cups with Selangor
Hobbies: Golf, bowling and squash
Best Goal You've Seen Scored: Peter Tsolakis' Under/16s, Port Melbourne
Favourite Food: Schnitzel and my Mum's cooking
Favourite Drink: Southern and Coke
Car: Proton Vira
Favourite T.V. Show: Seinfeld
Least favourit TV: Soapies
Favourite Movie: Top Gun, Jerry McGuire
Favourite Actor-Actress: Tom Cruise, Nicole Kidman
Preferred Music: All sorts
Least Preferred Music: Heavy Metal
Favourite Comedian: Mr Bean and Peter Tsolakis
Pet Hates: Dishonest people
Special Advice To Young Players: Enjoy your Soccer and practice, practice, practice
Person You Would Like To Meet: Mohammed Ali and Pele

It is a pity but even after more than two weeks of gestation, the 2-2 draw with Iran at the MCG doesn't look any less sad, the tactical blunders committed by Australia any less great. Waking up this morning, the savage irony of it is no less cruel. Australia still unbeaten in 18 games yet eliminated from the World Cup. That's right. Australia has not been beaten since a 2-0 defeat to South Africa in September of 1996, one year and three months ago.

But those figures are no consolation. Australia is not in the World Cup and won't be for another four years.

So why aren't we? And where do we go from here? Judging by the television ratings figures, there are some four million answers to those questions. Despite Soccer Australia's quick reaction, suggesting the policy of 'all the way with Tel' should continue, the sports pundits of the nation have a right to debate the debacle.

You could say they have a right to insist that time is given to proper debate before future directions are set.

Here then is some food for debate. The roots of Australia's demise can be traced back to a meeting between Asia and Oceania Confederation officials and then Soccer Australia chairman, John Constantine, in 1995 after FIFA decreed that Australia's path to the World Cup will be via Asia. The Asians offered that the Oceania winner could join phase two of the Asian qualifiers and take part in a round-robin series of ten teams, to be played on neutral soil.

Qualification, said the Asians, would then be automatic if the Oceania winner finished fourth or above.

Constantine knocked back the offer, insisting that we simply play the fourth best Asian team home-and-away. No round-robin, presumably because it was to be played on neutral soil, delivering no home gate such as the Australia-Argentina game in 1993 ... Constantine got his way.

In hindsight it was a bad decision. Commercially wise but technically risky. In a round-robin, after all, you can lose games but still manage to recover by winning others. In a round-robin I have no doubt that we would have finished above Iran, Japan, Saudi Arabia and Korea. But over two games, with a team lacking experience because of a shortage of real qualifying games, it is very, very risky.

Bad, or thin preparation was another clear reason for failure. Venables insisted as much after the MCG game. Iran played 15 qualifiers in all, all of them games with real stakes. We played just four, the two against New Zealand and the two against Iran. And New Zealand are so poor these days, they were hardly an opponent at all (no disrespect intended).

Other opportunities were frittered away. We played some friendlies but they were only friendlies. Then, in May-June, when all our overseas based players, except Viduka, were home, instead of playing two games against meaningful foreign opposition we put on something called the 'Superstars of Soccer', in actual fact a 'skins versus bibs' training games in thin disguise.

Then there were the technical and tactical errors in Melbourne, and I am not speaking of Aurelio Vidmar's missed chances. A huge selection mistake was the omission of Milan Ivanovic in preference to the younger, less experienced Steve Horvat, at a time when our defence had to be air-tight and superbly organised.

Sitting on the bench was Ivanovic with his 54 caps as Horvat was earning his 13th. Ivanovic, who was organising the Red Star Belgrade defence when Horvat was in primary school, had kept Australia from conceding a goal in 22 of those 54 games.

The turning point in the game came with the lone loony pitch invasion in the second half, just after Australia scored their second goal. The dislodging of the net and the delay put Australia off its momentum which, had it been maintained, may have brought more goals. But once the momentum was gone it was time to take drastic action because we knew Iran, with nothing to lose, would come. It was time at least then to put on Ivanovic to organise the tiring defence. Time, too to send on an enforcer, a man with a physical presence — like a Muscat — to neutralise at least one of the creators, Ali Daei or Bagheri.

It was time to issue stern instructions to kill the game, hide the ball and play to hold the result. No such instructions came, Ivanovic never came on and Muscat wasn't even on the bench.

So what do we do now? Because we have to do something, given that we have just failed at the World Cup with our best ever team, with our most expensive ever coach, and on our easiest qualifying path. That, folks, is what I call failure.

First we have to quickly build warm relations with Asia and lobby to have ourselves included in the Asian Cup, as the United States has been in the Copa America. If not we should take part in various other minor Asian tournaments, such as the Kirin Cup in Japan or the Presidents Cup in Korea. We cannot go four more agonising years without a meaningful game.

Of course much will depend on what qualifying path FIFA gives us this time. And with two automatic qualifiers from Asia in 2002 (Japan and Korea), don't bank on an Asian path.

We have to build a strong Olympic team which will grab the limelight in the next three years and which, in any case, will form the basis of our 2002 World Cup team.

And then there is the matter of the coach. By any measure of international tradition, a tradition which holds the coach accountable for failure, Terry Venables is extremely lucky to still be there. Only in Australia does a coach who fails get invited to stay and the one who succeeds (Rale Rasic) gets the sack. Both Japan and Iran sacked their coaches when failure was looming and ended up qualifying. We, of course, do the reverse.

Terry Venables: Should be kept on a full-time basis.

I know we won a lot of games under Venables, that we played pretty football and that he helped lift the sport's profile. But the mission was none of those things. The mission was to make the World Cup Finals. That was the ultimate raison d'être.

If Venables is to be kept on it can only be on a full-time basis, with him here dedicating all his energies to this job. It's time for Venables to be, as we say down under, 'fair dinkum'.

Letters cont . . .

EVEN MARK TAYLOR WATCHED!

Dear Sir,

I read with interest the record number of letters in last week's issue and your comments.

'Hill must go' is a common cry of letters in your worthy publication as well as in the national media. But are we not forgetting, David Hill was not on the field, he did not plan tactics and he was not one of the coaches involved with our 1998 World Cup campaign.

Another point of view, 'Venables must stay' has as many supporters as those that feel Terry took on a contract to take Australia to the World Cup Finals, along the easiest route ever, and he and his assistants failed!

Don't blame the referee for failing to spot the blatant holding of Viduka, in the area, as he was about to score. Don't blame the assistant referee for not signalling 'offside' when the Iranian player set up their goal while sitting on the ground.

Our 'all-professional' team played great football. They could have scored a hatful of goals, maybe they should have been a little less naive and studied the opposition and their record.

Even the most inexperienced coach should have noted the Iranian record against opponents rated considerably higher than Australia's Oceania minnows.

That four minutes of horror cost Australian soccer dearly. Some commentators estimate we have lost $10 million down the drain, plus potential sponsors for state and national competitions.

David Hill said on TV that he had a contract until 2000 and he was determined to see his term to a successful conclusion. Good!

A change at this time would see the Soccer ship rudderless and obviously, could easily end up on the rocks altogether.

So it seems the 1974 record, set by Rale Rasic and his band of part-timers, will extend out to 28-years at least, before it can be repeated.

Rasic showed great restraint in interviews after the match. He was a true professional. He gave credit where it was due and said the soccer supporters should look at the positives achieved by the campaign, which came to a heart wrenching stop before a record crowd of nearly 100,000 fans in Melbourne.

The organisation of the event was brilliant. The match program was an outstanding publication, the media coverage ran to colour double-page spreads, TV show hosts were talking about our team, about soccer, the true football, as never before.

Australians waved 30,000 flags, Australians from many cultures (including some of Iranian extraction), were united. They sang, they cheered and then, they cried. They cried for football and the opportunity lost.

Mark Taylor, of cricket fame, was reported as saying he had two beers after we scored the two goals. When Iran equalised, he didn't know how many he had to drown his sorrows.

Other sports' stars at the MCG were Cathy Freeman and David Campese, and both were devastated.

Rasic is right. There are many positives. The TV audience rated 34 for SBS, a record for any Australian sporting event.

It is significant that the man who could have heaped scorn and ridicule on the costly campaign is appealing for the soccer family to look for the positives. He could have criticised the spending of millions of dollars because payments, over four years during the 1974 campaign, totalled $10,000 AND he was criticised by one ASF official for being "money hungry".

This time we were trying to be one of 32 teams in the Finals, in 1974 there were only 16 spots up for grabs and the pathway was far more rugged. The 1974 Socceroos are something really special in Australian sporting history, they should not have been at the Finals because they were just a bunch of dedicated amateurs who ate, slept and breathed team work. They were led by an equally dedicated and wily coach, whose tactics resulted in a 0-2 result against East Germany, 0-3 against the ultimate champions, West Germany together with a 0-0 against a quality Chilean side.

Despite the respectable results, the ASF failed to capitalise on this team's record and Rale Rasic was sacked.

Soccer in Australia was the loser. Maybe the time is right to invite the past and present to join hands?

Love him or hate him, you have to admit that David Hill is an energetic and smart operator. Maybe the time has come for he and Rale Rasic to sit down over lunch and look at the 'POSITIVES'.

G Green
Alstonville, NSW

WOMEN'S WRITES

BY JANENE MAR

TRACI BARTLETT'S STORY:

Perseverance The Key

Defender Traci Bartlett will look back on 1997 as a memorable year, one where things finally came together again and dreams were realised.

22 May 1997 saw Bartlett frantically rushing around packing her bags for a tour to the US (the flight taking off the next day). She had made the Australian team again, a last minute replacement for the injured Cheryl Salisbury for the US Women's Cup. It was her first selection since the World Cup two years prior.

But Bartlett had little time to savour the moment on hearing the news. "I'd spoken to Greg Brown a couple of days beforehand, and he'd told me I was on standby in case Cheryl was not well enough," she recalled. "But when I found out, I was so rushed, I really didn't get excited until I got on the plane."

Once there, her presence was not merely to make up the numbers. The 25-year-old has played in every match for Australia since her recall, if not in the starting eleven, then as a substitute. After the US Cup, Bartlett also made the European tour, and featured prominently in the recent Tri-Nations Series.

It is a fact in which she takes great pleasure, especially after living out some difficult times in her 'stop start' career.

That 1995 World Cup turned out to be the best and the worst rolled into one for this determined player. Over the three matches, in what was Australia's debut on the big stage, the defender was never given the nod by then coach Tom Sermanni to come in off the bench.

"A couple of others were in the same situation too," recalled Bartlett. "I was still happy to be part of the team and that Australia got to the World Cup. So in a way I'd achieved my goal, but not fully, as I hadn't played in it. Sometimes I get a bit disappointed, but that's life."

Five months later and she was one of several dropped from the national squad selections.

But she took what must have been a soul-destroying period in her stride. Her unassuming, happy-go-lucky personality and carefree attitude is what has pulled her through, and now helped her turn her fortunes around.

"At first, straight after the World Cup, it was like, 'I'm over it — don't care.' There was a lot of negativity going on around me, but I wasn't getting into it. I just thought he's the coach and he'll pick who he wants. For about a year then I just cruised along and played, but I was never really upset about it all."

"A year later, I enjoyed playing again, and I thought, 'They're not too much better than me'."

The turning point was the move to Canberra mid-last year. Leaving her native Sydney to relocate to the wintry capital has resurrected the Bartlett career. Joining the ITC program at the ACT Academy of Sport, she earned the opportunity to play in the inaugural national league.

Her performances over last summer signalled Bartlett's return — a new, improved version.

She consistently shone throughout the series, a fresh assurance obvious in her play, leading her new team from the centre of the defence from where she also contributed to the attack. Cool under pressure, reliable, timely in the tackle, with effective distribution, Bartlett also had the ability to turn the game around when the chips were down. It was clear she was out there enjoying her football, and as a result was playing like never before.

"Just training with Chris Tanzey and the ACT Academy made me really keen, and I improved heaps," Bartlett enthuses.

But the in-form Aussie was cautious not to let her thoughts run away with her. "People started saying you should make the team, and I'd say, 'Whatever — don't talk to me'. I was just playing and having fun, I wasn't stressing, and I found it easier to go to training.

"I'd hope to get in, but if not then it wouldn't have been the end of the world," she continued. "And if I did, then that would be a bonus. Still now, that's the way I look at it — I never expect to get in. I guess it's the way I cope if I don't make it."

In some ways, maybe the break away from the green and gold has also helped to revitalise the brilliant defender. "Even before the World Cup, I didn't train as much as I should have, then afterwards, I thought I'll just retire, have fun and muck around. But playing again and coming to Canberra, Chris Tanzey is really full on — I enjoy his intensity of training. I noticed my improvement, more than with any other coach.

"At the moment, I'm fitter than ever, faster, I've lost weight, and my skinfolds are better, so I suppose physically I'm more in form. And I think I'm playing the best I've ever played."

It's an opinion widely shared, and Bartlett's return is making a big impact on Australia's fortunes at present.

Her overall performance throughout the Tri-Nations Series against China and New Zealand was outstanding, despite playing in a position unfamiliar to her at left full-back.

"I'm not left-footed, it made me realise I need more practice on my left foot. Greg said I'd be playing there and I'm not going to complain — I'll take any position he gives me. It's always a challenge playing for Australia, and this was an added challenge. I enjoyed it."

The brilliant defender names the final over China as her career highlight, surpassing the excitement of going to the World Cup.

She believes it was the Matildas' teamwork and commitment which was the key to the victory. "We were really organised. We'd been working on the defence over those two weeks we were together, and it went to plan, we stayed really tight. We gave a hundred percent, even though we were all dying. It was the big team thing, we all wanted it so bad."

BARTLETT'S EARLY DAYS:

She first played Soccer at age nine, although if not for her father, she may not have taken it up at all. After playing with her brother in the backyard, she thought she'd also like to have a go, and dad was in full agreement. He discovered an Under/10 girls' competition at Smithfield Hotspurs, the same club as her brother.

"I went down there but I didn't like it," recalls Bartlett. "After the first day, I told dad I'm not playing — there was a nasty girl there. Dad told me to go again, and I ended up becoming friends with her."

Bartlett went on to make her first senior National Championship, and made an instant impact to be named in the Australian Squad at the week's conclusion. "I was pretty surprised, I think I was the youngest."

Bartlett played in the series against Swedish club Malmo, then gained her first cap against Papua New Guinea in the World Cup qualifiers in 1991, and scored a goal to celebrate the occasion.

The qualifiers didn't end up with celebrations though, Australia missed out on a place at the World Cup with an inferior goal difference to New Zealand.

"The game we lost we should have won, and then we didn't score enough against PNG. It was pretty heartbreaking, but I thought I was only young and I'd get another chance."

THE FUTURE ...

Having been through that all before, Bartlett knows the importance of performing in next year's qualifiers, with New Zealand this time holding home advantage.

Her form puts her in a great position with selections for the first AIS scholarships not far down the track. Now resident in Canberra, she holds the advantage of having set herself up already.

The former bank teller was awarded a position under the ACT Government's Sports Enhancement Scheme, which allows elite athletes up to ten hours per week off for training, plus special paid leave during national team commitments.

Her position as an administrator in the Canberra Institute of Technology's Departments of Sport Fitness and Recreation, and Health Sciences means Bartlett is working in the sporting field as well.

After making the move south in the middle of winter, Bartlett claims you get used to it. She also enjoys the close proximity of everything, much better than the long journey to and from work she used to make in Sydney.

The AIS program will be the next big step for Soccer in Australia and one viewed with much anticipation. "Australia needs it," says Bartlett. "Having the base of the team together to train every day or so, we can only improve."

TRACI'S OTHER SIDE ....

Whenever there is a chance, Bartlett escapes to the coast and is currently learning to surf and play golf. Shopping is her other weakness, but Bartlett is never far away from the training pitch, or the gym, or the pool.

Even in this present rest phase, it's still almost a daily routine. As they say, no pain no gain, just ask Traci Bartlett. Australia's rejuvenated defender, ready to make 1998 even bigger. Go for it Traci!

TOP VENUES FOR WORLD CUP

In keeping with its commitment to top class facilities for both players and spectators, the US organising committee has announced the match venues for the 1999 World Cup.

Following the success of the Men's World Cup USA '94, the Women's event will also be moved around the country with seven cities to host matches.

VENUES

GiantsStadium: Capacity 77,000 in New Jersey
Foxboro Stadium: Capacity 60,000 in Boston
Civic Stadium: Capacity 27,000 in Portland
Spartan Stadium: Capacity 31,200, jointly with Stanford Stadium: Capacity 60,000 in California
Jack Kent Cooke Stadium: Capacity 80,000 in Washington
Soldier Field Stadium: Capacity 65,000 in Chicago

**The final will be held at the famous Rose Bowl Stadium in downtown Pasadena. This wonderful stadium can house 102, 000 fans.*

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or write to: PO Box 232 Gladesville 2111

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Around the Globe

ENGLAND

PREMIER LEAGUE

Arsenal	1	**Blackburn**	3
Overmars 18		Wilcox 57, Gallacher 65, Sherwood 89	
Barnsley	2	**Newcastle**	2
Redfearn 9, Hendrie 75		Gillespie 44, 49	
Chelsea	0	**Leeds Utd**	0
Coventry City	4	**Tottenham H**	0
Huckerby 42, 84, Breen 63, Hall 87			
C Palace	0	**Liverpool**	3
		McManaman 39, Owen 56, Leonhardsen 61	
Everton	0	**Wimbledon**	0
Southampton	2	**Leicester**	1
Le Tissier 2, Benali 54			
West Ham	1	**Sheff Wed**	0
Kitson 68			

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Man Utd	17	11	4	2	43	13	37
Chelsea	17	11	1	5	41	18	34
B'burn	17	9	6	2	30	18	22
Arsenal	17	8	6	3	31	18	30
Leeds	17	9	3	5	26	19	30
Leicester	17	7	6	4	22	15	27
Derby	16	8	2	6	30	24	26
L'pool	16	7	4	5	27	17	25
N'castle	15	7	3	5	18	19	24
W'bledon	17	6	4	7	19	21	22
West H	17	7	1	9	24	28	22
A Villa	17	6	3	8	19	23	21
Shef Wed	17	6	3	8	30	38	21
C Palace	17	5	5	7	17	22	20
Bolton	17	4	7	6	13	24	19
Coventry	17	3	8	6	13	24	17
S'hampn	17	5	1	11	20	27	16
Tot'ham	17	4	4	9	14	28	16
Everton	17	3	4	10	16	27	13
Barnsley	17	4	1	12	15	45	13

DIVISION ONE

Birmingham	2	Man City	1
Bradford City	1	Bury	0
Charlton	1	Port Vale	0
Huddersfield	1	Norwich	3
Ipswich Town	2	Portsmouth	0
Middlesbrough	4	Reading	0
Sheff Utd	2	Swindon	1
Stockport	3	Tranmere	1
Stoke City	0	Crewe	2
Sunderland	2	WBA	0
Oxford Utd	3	QPR	1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Middlesb	21	12	6	3	35	17	42
N Forest	21	12	6	3	34	18	42
WBA	21	12	4	5	25	17	40
Sheff Utd	21	10	8	3	31	20	38
Swindon	21	11	4	6	30	28	37
Charlton	21	10	5	6	40	29	35
S'land	20	9	6	5	30	21	33
Stockport	21	9	5	7	35	29	32
Wolves	21	9	5	7	27	25	32
Bradford	21	7	9	5	21	21	30
Bir'ham	21	7	7	7	21	17	28
QPR	21	7	6	8	26	33	27
Port Vale	21	7	5	9	25	26	26
Stoke	21	7	5	9	24	28	26
Norwich	21	7	5	9	20	31	26
Reading	21	6	6	9	21	31	24
Tranmere	20	6	4	10	27	29	22
Man City	21	5	6	10	23	25	21
Ipswich	20	4	9	7	22	24	21
Bury	21	4	9	8	21	30	21
P'mouth	20	5	5	10	26	32	20
Oxford U	21	5	5	11	24	32	20
Hud'sfield	21	5	5	11	21	34	20
Crewe	21	5	3	13	24	36	18

DIVISION TWO

Brentford	3	Blackpool	1
Burnley	0	Wigan	2
Carlisle	2	Fulham	0
Chesterfield	0	Luton	0
Gillingham	1	Southend	2
Plymouth	3	Millwall	0
Preston NE	1	Northampton	0
Walsall	2	Bournemouth	1
Watford	1	Bristol City	1
Wycombe	2	Oldham	1
York City	1	Wrexham	0
Bristol R	0	Grimsby	4

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Watford	21	15	4	2	36	14	49
Bristol C	21	14	3	4	38	17	45
Oldham	21	9	7	5	36	27	34
Ch'field	21	8	9	4	22	17	33
Millwall	20	9	5	6	27	21	32
N'Hamp	21	8	8	5	23	15	32
York C	21	8	6	7	26	24	30
Bo'mou	21	7	9	5	23	21	30
Blackp'l	21	8	5	8	29	32	29
Wrexham	20	7	8	5	27	23	29
Grimsby	21	7	8	6	23	18	29
Preston	21	8	4	9	27	21	28
Bristol R	21	7	7	7	27	29	28
Fulham	21	7	7	7	24	23	28
G'ham	21	7	6	8	26	30	27
Walsall	20	7	5	8	22	24	26
Wycom	21	5	8	8	28	33	23
Wigan	20	6	4	10	28	33	22
Luton	21	5	7	9	21	31	22
Southend	21	6	4	11	21	38	22
Plymouth	21	4	9	8	24	29	21
Burnley	21	4	8	9	23	31	20
Brentford	21	4	7	10	21	34	19
Carlisle	21	4	4	13	24	41	16

DIVISION THREE

Barnet	3	Macclesfield	1
Cardiff City	0	Peterborough	0
Chester	2	Darlington	1
Hull City	3	Colchester	1
Lincoln	1	Hartlepool	1
Mansfield	1	Brighton	1
Notts Cty	5	Doncaster	2
Rochdale	3	Swansea	0
Rotherham	0	Torquay	1
Scunthorpe	1	Scarborough	2
Shrewsbury	1	Leyton Orient	2
Cambridge	2	Exeter	1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lincoln	21	11	7	3	23	16	40
Peterbor'	21	10	9	2	39	19	39
Notts Cty	21	10	8	3	29	21	38
Exeter	21	9	8	4	30	23	35
S'Thorpe	20	9	6	5	28	24	33
R'ham	21	8	8	5	34	31	32
Barnet	21	9	5	7	31	28	32
H'pool	21	7	11	3	30	23	32
Scarboro'	21	9	4	8	32	30	31
Chester	21	9	4	8	31	27	31
Torquay	21	8	7	6	31	30	31
M'field	20	7	9	4	28	20	30
Leyton O	21	7	7	7	21	19	28
C'chester	20	7	6	7	29	28	27
Cardiff	20	5	12	3	20	19	27
S'bury	20	7	5	8	31	30	26
C'bridge	21	5	9	7	28	28	24
M'field	21	6	6	9	26	26	24
Rochdale	21	7	2	12	24	26	23
Swansea	21	6	3	12	22	32	21
D'lington	20	4	8	8	23	30	20
Hull City	21	5	4	12	28	39	19
Brighton	21	3	6	12	15	29	15
D'caster	21	1	6	14	14	49	9

SCOTLAND

PREMIER LEAGUE

Celtic	1	**Hearts**	0
Burley 80			
Dunfermline	0	**Rangers**	0
Hibernian	2	**Aberdeen**	2
Walker 2, 83		Dodds 43, Jess 68	
Motherwell	1	**Dundee Utd**	0
Coyle 52			
St Johnstone	1	**Kilmarnock**	1
O'Boyle 79p		Mitchell 71	

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Hearts	16	12	1	3	37	17	37
Rangers	16	10	5	1	42	18	35
Celtic	16	10	2	4	28	12	32
Dundee Utd	16	5	6	5	27	24	21
Dunf'line	16	5	5	6	21	32	20
St Johnstone	16	5	4	7	17	23	19
Kilmarnock	16	5	3	8	15	32	18
Hibernian	16	3	4	9	21	25	13
Motherwell	16	3	4	9	20	29	13
Aberdeen	16	2	6	8	15	31	12

DIVISION ONE

Ayr Utd	0	St Mirren	2
Dundee	0	Atirling	0
Morton	0	Falkirk	2
Hamilton	P	Airdrie	P
Partick T	1	Raith R	3

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dundee	16	10	4	2	26	8	34
Hamilton	16	8	4	4	25	19	28
Raith	16	7	4	5	19	14	25
Airdrie	16	6	7	3	17	18	25
Falkirk	16	7	3	6	23	27	24
Ayr Utd	16	5	4	7	22	21	19
St Mirren	16	5	4	7	19	24	19
Morton	16	5	3	8	19	22	18
Partick	16	2	7	7	21	29	13
Stirling	16	2	6	8	19	28	12

DIVISION TWO

Clydebank	1	Caledonian	1
East Fife	3	Brechin	1
Forfar	2	Livingston	2
Stenh'semuir	3	Stranraer	0

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Livingston	15	8	5	2	25	15	29
Clydebank	15	7	7	1	24	12	28
Stranraer	15	5	7	3	26	20	22
Q South	15	6	2	7	24	26	20
Clyde	15	5	5	5	22	21	20
Forfar	15	5	4	6	26	29	19
East Fife	15	5	3	7	20	27	18
St'semuir	15	4	4	7	19	27	16
Brechin	15	3	6	6	18	28	15
IC Thistle	15	3	5	7	25	24	14

DIVISION THREE

Arbroath	3	Cowdenbeath	2
Berwick	1	Montrose	2
East Stirling	1	Albion	0
Queen's Park	3	Alloa	0
Ross County	2	Dumbarton	3

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Arbroath	16	10	2	4	35	18	32
Ross Cty	16	9	4	3	39	20	31
Alloa Ath	15	10	0	5	34	17	30
E Stirling	16	9	1	6	28	22	28
Albion R	15	7	3	5	25	26	24
Queen's Pk	16	5	5	6	19	19	20
Berwick	15	5	3	7	21	28	14
Dumbarton	15	3	5	7	22	29	14
Montrose	15	2	4	9	19	40	10
Cow'beath	15	3	1	11	7	30	10

FRANCE

Lens	0	Marseille	1
Bordeaux	0	Cannes	1
Guingamp	1	Auxerre	1
Chateauroux	1	Bastia	1
Lyon	0	Le Havre	1
Toulouse	1	Montpellier	1
Nantes	2	Strasbourg	1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Monaco	19	12	2	5	33	18	38
Metz	19	11	5	3	30	17	38
PS Germain	19	11	4	4	31	16	37
Marseille	20	11	4	5	26	14	37
Lens	20	10	4	6	28	23	34
Bordeaux	20	8	8	4	24	20	32
Auxerre	20	9	3	8	32	27	30
Bastia	20	7	8	5	22	16	29
Lyon	20	8	2	10	23	24	26
Toulouse	20	6	7	7	18	24	25
Montpellier	20	5	9	6	19	21	24
Guingamp	20	6	6	8	19	23	24
Nantes	20	6	5	9	20	25	23
Le Havre	20	3	10	7	18	23	19
Chat'roux	20	5	4	11	18	32	19
Strasbourg	20	4	6	10	20	29	18
Rennes	19	4	5	10	20	32	17
Cannes	20	5	2	13	19	36	17

HOLLAND

Heerenveen	3	V Arnhem	2
Roda JC	3	Maastricht	0
Rotterdam	4	Willem II	1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ajax	18	17	1	0	56	4	52
PSV	18	10	7	1	52	21	37
V Arnhem	19	10	5	4	47	32	35
Heerenveen	19	10	5	4	31	23	35
Feyenoord	18	9	4	5	29	21	31
Willem II	19	9	3	7	33	27	30
Rotterdam	19	7	6	6	37	33	27
Utrecht	17	7	2	8	34	39	23
F Sittard	18	7	2	9	24	34	23
Roda JC	19	6	4	9	26	26	22
Nijmegen	19	7	1	11	22	40	22
T Enschede	17	5	6	6	19	20	21
NAC Breda	18	6	3	9	20	24	21
Graafschap	19	5	6	8	22	19	21
Maastricht	19	5	2	12	19	47	17
Groningen	18	3	6	9	22	34	15
Waalwijk	18	3	6	9	22	38	15
Volendam	18	2	5	11	13	46	11

GERMANY

In the Bundesliga the main interest came from Bayern Munich, who earned a 3-2 victory over Borussia Monchengladbach, ending a three-game losing streak, while World Club champions Borussia Dortmund crashed in a 4-2 loss to bottom-of-the-table Cologne. Dortmund's loss left the European Cup holders only two points off bottom spot.

Carsten Jancker put Bayern 2-0 up with goals in the 20th and 50th minutes. A third strike by Christian Nerlinger looked to have wrapped up the game, but Bayern relaxed too early, and Monchengladbach captain Stefan Effenberg curled the ball into the net from an 18 metre free-kick in the 63rd minute, and Joergen Pettersson scored with a hopeful shot 25 minutes later.

Austria's newly-crowned Footballer of the Year, Tony Polster, sank Borussia Dortmund single handedly with a hat-trick for Cologne, lifting his side three places off the bottom of the standings.

Polster struck twice in the opening 17 minutes before Heiko Herrlich (20th) and Stephane Chapuisat (50th) restored the balance.

Third-placed Stuttgart kept up their title chase with a 1-0 win over lowly Arminia Bielefeld.

Bottom side Bielefeld's loss at Stuttgart came courtesy of a trademark free-kick by Bulgarian Krassimir Balakov, while promoted Wolfsburg moved up to sixth with a 2-1 win away to Hamburg.

Schalke led early through Johan de Kock's headed goal against Duisburg but the visitors fought back gamely and deserved their 1-1 draw after Markus Osthoff found the net on the half hour.

Kaiserslautern's third loss of the season came at the hands of Hertha Berlin, who have fought their way from off the bottom to ninth with six victories in their last seven matches.

Cologne	4	B Dortmund	2
Schalke	1	Duisburg	1
Stuttgart	1	A Bielefeld	0
Karlsruhe	0	1860 Munich	0
B Munich	3	B M'gladbach	2

Euro Comp Special

Auxerre, Spartak Moscow and Lazio all reached the quarter-finals of the UEFA Cup with narrow second-leg victories.

Auxerre, mindful of the fact they could be the last French survivors (given that Strasbourg were 'under the cosh' at Inter Milan) saw off Twente Enschede, while Spartak edged Germany's Karlsruhe and Lazio defeated Rapid Vienna of Austria.

Auxerre, leading 1-0 from the away leg, quickly established their dominance in the return in front of their own supporters.

And they took the lead after just four minutes, Steve Marlet racing on to Diomede's long through ball before smacking a low, crisp shot into the net from the edge of the box.

The Dutch then wove some intricate patterns in midfield without threatening the home back four.

Auxerre keeper Lionel Charbonnier was called into action just before the break when teammate Franck Silvestre inadvertently almost flicked the ball past him.

Charbonnier then produced a classy save to deny Theo Ten Caat from a free-kick.

But in the second half Auxerre again turned up the heat, the dangerous Stephane Guivarc'h firing wide from Sabri Lamouchi's searching cross.

The pressure told when Yann Lachuer was dragged down as he stormed into the area.

Guivarc'h, joint leading scorer in the French league, clubbed the ball right-footed into the roof of the net from the resulting penalty to gift wrap his side's place in the last eight.

Spartak Moscow joined them, though only by the slenderest of margins, after beating Karlsruhe in bitterly cold conditions in the Russian capital.

Alexandr Schirko scored the only goal ten minutes from the end of extra-time to send the 28,000 crowd home happy.

The win was no more than Spartak deserved, as they twice hit the woodwork early on.

The second half was marked by constant pressure from Spartak, but scoring possibilities for the hosts remained poor until Sergei Alenichev found himself with only keeper Claus Reitmaier to beat, but the German made an impressive save to force extra time.

In the 110th minute, Shirko netted the winner following an astute pass from Andrei Tikhonov.

Many of the players wore gloves, leggings and even hats in some cases as the thermometer plunged to minus 15 Celsius, while the pitch resembled a farmer's field!

Karlsruhe coach Winfried Schaefer said he had urged his men to try and attack, but that just wasn't possible in the circumstances.

"We'll just have to get over the defeat as best we can. But anyway it was a bit of a cheek to make us play football on a pitch like this," he groaned.

Lazio meanwhile beat Rapid Vienna by the only goal in Rome to advance 3-0 on aggregate.

Spanish international defender Carlos Aguilera led Atletico Madrid to a comfortable victory over Croatia Zagreb in a highly-charged UEFA Cup third round second-leg.

Aguilera set up Jose Luis Caminero for the only goal of the game just before half time, giving Atletico a 2-1 aggregate win and a place in the quarter-finals.

The goal was meagre reward for the domination of the home side, who restricted the visitors to a handful of half-chances, while wasting nearly a dozen clear opportunities themselves.

Brazilian midfielder Juninho hit the bar twice in the second half, while Czech midfielder Radek Bejbl had a headed goal disallowed in one of several dubious offside decisions.

RESULTS:
UEFA CUP THIRD ROUND
SECOND-LEG

Spartak Moscow 1 SC Karlsruhe 0
(Shirko 110)
Spartak win 1-0

Auxerre 2 Twente Enschede 0
(Marlet 4, Guivarc'h 78p)
Auxerre win 3-0

Lazio 1 Rapid Vienna 0
(Venturin 87)
Lazio win 3-0

Aston Villa 2 Steaua Bucharest 0
(Milosevic 71, Taylor 85)
Villa win 3-2

Inter Milan 3 Strasbourg 0
(Ronaldo 28, Zanetti 49, Simeone 74)
Inter win 3-2

Schalke 2 Braga 0
(Max 46, Eijkelkamp 63)
Schalke win 2-0

Atletico Madrid 1 Croatia Zagreb 0
(Caminero 44)
At Madrid win 2-1

VfL Bochum 2 Ajax 2
(Hofman 59, Mamic 70) (Arweladze 51, Dani 73)

Dutch giants Ajax, 4-2 winners in the first-leg, reached the UEFA Cup quarter-finals when they held German opponents Bochum to a 2-2 draw in the return.

Bochum had only themselves to blame after squandering enough chances to have reached double figures.

Juninho

Darius Wosz, and the other home strikers, created panic in the Ajax defence in the first half, and only poor finishing and excellent goalkeeping from Edwin van der Sar kept it goalless.

Ironically it was the visitors who eventually went ahead, Chota Arweladze scoring six minutes into the second-half.

Norbert Hofman scored an equaliser eight minutes later when his fierce shot was deflected into the net off a defender, and Zoran Mamic gave the Germans fresh hope by making it 2-1 with 20 minutes left after unleashing a tremendous drive.

Ajax, however, snuffed out the comeback thanks to a goal from Portuguese front runner Dani in the 73rd minute.

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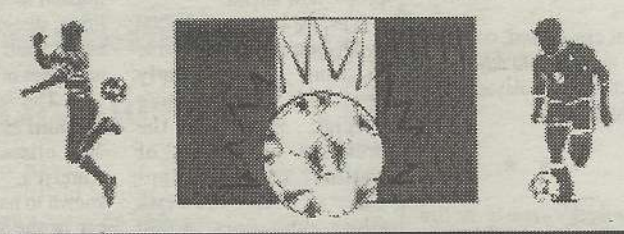
WORLD CUP FOOTBALL
FRANCE 1998



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HOST	CUP WINNER
1974 GERMANY	1974 GERMANY
1978 ARGENTINA	1978 ARGENTINA
1982 SPAIN	1982 ITALY
1986 MEXICO	1986 ARGENTINA
1990 ITALY	1990 GERMANY
1994 USA	1994 BRAZIL

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LETTERS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

Sack Charlie Dempsey

Dear Sir,

Put on your hard hat Chicken Little, the sky is falling in!

I suppose the 'over the top' reaction to the MCG, from the normally disinterested daily papers, was to be expected.

Sack Hill and Venables?

No Way! It was Havelange, Blatter and, most of all, CHARLIE DEMPSEY who gave us the sudden death route to the World Cup by stopping us joining Asia.

Hill was left as a voice crying in the wilderness. If the game is to go anywhere in this country, that is where we belong, even if it is only in the Asian Cup and the Asian Club Championships.

Interesting that the moderate and well thought out comments, in your December 8 issue, mostly came from coaches and players, while the most rabid axe wielder is a bloke who works for the organisation that has already destroyed Rugby League.

With friends like that, who needs enemies?

In summary:

1/ Let's go for it David Hill, but the national support shown in Melbourne probably means that the ethnic thing is just about history and economics,

2/ Let's keep Venables, if we can afford him, it makes the Socceroo games worth watching,

3/ Asia is a MUST, every time we can get there with a national, youth or club team,

4/ Rene Rivkin reckons NSL teams are a better investment than the stock market. The only thing that could prove him wrong is a bunch of officials who want to look after their own states, clubs, interests, egos or petty grudges ahead of the success of the game,

5/ Promotion/relegation has to come. Let's do it in 2001 and start planning for it now,

6/ Have a good hard look at how the state federations are working. There are a lot more problems at that level than in the NSL.

In the end, it's all about forward thinking, planning and getting the promotion and marketing right.

Gold at the Olympics will ease the pain!

T Martin
Mountain Creek, Qld

Anguish of 'Soccer Girls'

Dear Sir,

After finishing my HSC, I was excited to get right back into supporting Marconi again, and I was even more excited to hear there was a match against Sydney United, close to where I live, at Parramatta Stadium. Although we enjoyed the game, the way the security and staff at Parramatta treated us, really threw a wet blanket on our night.

Firstly, I am of Italian blood, which is the reason I was attracted to soccer in the first place. I liked the idea of sharing our culture and supporting our team with people from all different nationalities. But to add some colour to the crowd, I like to wave an Italian flag when a goal is scored.

I'm not sure if it's regulation at all A-League games, that national flags are not allowed to be brought in now, but I was approached by a security guard who tried to take it off of me. He then told us that if we were supporting Marconi, we shouldn't be in that area of the stadium, basically, we couldn't sit where we wanted to!

The seating arrangements were OK with us and we sat with the Marconi Stallions Supporters Club, and I'd like to thank them for putting some positively back into a night when, otherwise, it would have simply upset me.

When we did get to our 'correct' spot, I noticed a large Australian flag draped over the fence, so asked a security guard what it was doing there if no national flags were allowed. He told me that only Australian flags were allowed in, no Croatian or Italian flags.

He ended by asking me what country I was in, in a very smug way, and to me, racist manner.

Not only did we have to pay 'double' the price for a ticket than we usually do at Marconi, we also could not bring horns, to add to the noise and support we give our team, and we cannot support our side by waving the colours we choose to.

Soccer Australia may have won the battle about the logos clubs can use on their shirts, but they have no right to tell the fans by what manner they can and cannot support their teams. You cannot take away from individuality.

Soccer in Australia was built up by migrants, to a sport where the migrants, and their children, are now being discriminated against. I never, ever thought this would happen to the game in Australia.

As far as I am concerned, the move to Parramatta was the most ridiculous thing that could have happened to Sydney United, it has not widened their supporter base, not even half of the stadium was filled that night.

To Soccer Australia, be very careful, you may end up losing many of the original supporters due to your ignorant ways and insensitivity.

N Ramaci
'The Soccer Girls,'
Winston Hills, NSW

PS: Thank you for letting us express our opinions, and in this case, our emotions in your paper. That is the reason why we love it so much, you ENCOURAGE free speech.

Editor's note:

No-one can tell the supporters to forget their roots, it's never going to happen, however, I feel you are being rather naive in your approach to what happened.

It is common knowledge that NO foreign national flags may be taken into grounds, the security, and the club, have every right, under threat of heavy fines, to confiscate any such item.

The manner of the security guards is another matter and one that may be looked at by the club if you feel strongly enough to complain to them about.

Once again, this IS Australia, the clubs are plying their trade IN Australia and everyone, sooner or later, must respect the fact that clubs who cannot, will not, attract a broad supporter base will fall by the wayside.

Simple economics, nothing more.

NOT QUITE RIGHT

Dear Sir,

In your last publication (issue 855) a number of very interesting points were made when expressing opinions on the five changes to improve the standard of the game in this country.

Personally, I have played soccer in three countries and coached two, in Austria and Australia.

Since arriving in Australia 47 years ago, I was involved with three teams: Greta Australs, Newcastle Australs and Sydney Croatia, or as it is today, Sydney United. During those 47 years, I went to great lengths to get a bigger share of general acceptance for the sport in this country from the mainstream supporter base. It did not work for one reason: tradition.

Deep-rooted support for Rugby League in eastern states and Aussie Rules in western ones, could never be overcome. How many times have I seen non-ethnic parents bring the young kids to soccer games in the morning, then the whole family goes off and attends the League match in the afternoon!

That, except in special international games or Grand Finals, goes on year after year. Where are the 40,000 people who attended last season's Soccer Grand Final? In the huge Suncorp Stadium, only about 3-5,000 people now attend.

Yes, we have seen 85,000 in Melbourne, for one game in four years, simply because it was something special. Where is the promised 'big success' of Carlton? They were supposed to be another Perth Glory but only 3,000 (approx.) attend their matches, almost ALL of whom are classed as 'ethnics'.

Because of my Croatian ancestry, you would expect me to ask for the head of Mr Hill. I will not do this, but, from my 47 years of experience in this country, I would advise him to stop bashing ethnics.

Firstly, prove to us all that a non-ethnic community can produce the clubs and players, the so-called 'ethnic' sides have produced in recent times.

Mr Hill, the number of people on the terraces will not bring Australia to the World Cup Finals, only the clubs producing world class stars such as: Bosnich, Zelic, Viduka, Horvat, Popovic, Kalac, the Vidmar, Petkovic and Aloisi brothers, Enes, Arnold, Slater, Skoko and many, many others.

Will, for instance, Gippsland Falcons ever produce an Australian international?

I hope 'Northern Spirit' are admitted next season, on the condition that they cannot poach any other club's players. If they have the resources, they should bring home the many Australian overseas based players and fill the side with 'non-ethnic' players. Soccer Australia has stipulated that certain other clubs must do so. Imagine if you were to order a top flight European club to do so, after they spent time and money on bringing the players to international standard before 'gift wrapping' them and giving them to the opposition. Are we punished because we can produce top players in this country?

Your note to one of your letter writers was not quite right either. There are thousands of soccer experts around the world who did not coach either a top, or national, team, yet are recognised in the world of Soccer. Many Soccer experts have successful careers outside of the game and have the right to their own opinion. I can assure you that 95% of world coaches, after leading 2-0 at home, would have closed up the game. The game was about qualifying for the World Cup, not to show the world that we could thrash Iran 5-0 on the night.

To finish, here are my five changes to improve the game in Australia:

1/ Let ethnic and non-ethnic communities work hand-in-hand in a healthy competition, the game will de-ethnicise itself through natural processes in the years ahead,

2/ The season should be extended as we have a similar climate to South America, and they are known to have the best players in the world. Our real competition has just 26 games, any coach will tell you that he cannot produce world standard players in only six months of a season (one reason why so many of our players are heading overseas),

3/ The team that wins the competition after the normal course of the season are the Champions,

4/ Badly in need of Asian Cup competition, UEFA style,

5/ Involvement of big business in the game.

Mario Pospishil

Italian Affair

By Joe Russo

The World Cup draw seems very favourable for Italy, however, the three countries in the group cannot be underestimated — Chile, Austria and Cameroon.

Italy struggled to qualify, in fact, against countries such as Georgia and Poland they struggled to get beyond 0-0 draws. Cesare Maldini has a lot of work to do before France '98.

Chile possess the deadly strike-force of Marcelo Salas and Ivan Zamorano. After missing the last two World Cups, they will surely have something to prove.

In 1982, in Spain, Italy last played Cameroon in the World Cup. It ended in a 1-1 draw, with Francesco Graziani scoring Italy's goal from a header. Of course, the Azzurri were then coached by Enzo Bearzot and went on to win the tournament but, Cameroon will, as always, be unpredictable.

In the 1990 World Cup Finals, Italy opened the campaign by playing Austria, at the Olympic Stadium in Rome. The game will always be remembered for the launching of a little Sicilian named Salvatore 'Toto' Schillaci onto the world scene.

Schillaci came on as a second half substitute for Andre Carnevale, and scored the only goal of the game by heading in a Gianluca Vialli cross.

It was the first of six goals for 'Toto' at Italia '90.

Further, Austria are now coached by Herbert Prohaska, the former Inter and Roma midfielder of the early 80s. His vast experience in the Serie A should count for a lot at France '98.

Fans of the Azzurri should therefore be cautious. While 'on paper' the draw seems favourable, we all know that football is 'a funny old game'.

★ ★ ★

At the start of the year, who would have ever imagined that Udinese would be up with the 'big boys' in the higher echelons of the Serie A ladder?

Sure, last year they finished high enough to gain a place in the UEFA Cup, but to be looking even better this time out is something else.

Udinese are coached by Alberto Zacceroni, by no means a big name in Serie A coaching circles, and have a squad that is comprised of some 13 foreigners, many of whom are hardly known outside of Italy.

The one true exception to this is their German international striker Oliver Bierhoff, yes, that man who scored the 'Golden Goal' for Germany to win the 1996 European Championship at Wembley in 1996 against the Czech Republic.

Bierhoff has been in outstanding form for Udinese this season. However, in the off-season, speculation was high that he was moving on to one of Italy's bigger clubs, namely Juventus.

I am sure that fans of Udinese are glad that the club didn't sell him to the Turin giants.

★ ★ ★

How lucky can Juventus be?

Last week, at the Delle Alpi Stadium in Turin, they beat Manchester United 1-0, thanks to a Filippo Inzaghi goal in the 83rd minute.

This favourable result at home, combined with some others that went their way, means that Juve now qualify for the second phase of the Champions League, as one of the four best second placed teams.

After their previous 0-2 defeat by Feyenoord, and 2-3 loss to Man Utd at Old Trafford, it seemed their hopes had been dashed. However, they clung on to their faint hopes and made it.

Not so lucky was the other Italian side, Parma. They were held to a 1-1 draw with Galatasary in Istanbul, a result not sufficient to see them pass into the knock-out rounds.

In the UEFA Cup, both Inter and Lazio made it to the quarter-finals. Lazio, in front of only 10,000 fans at the Olympic Stadium, beat Rapid Vienna (Austria) 1-0 to qualify 3-0 on aggregate.

Inter did it much tougher. They faced Strasbourg (France), at the San Siro Stadium in Turin, and were already 0-2 down from the first leg. Things didn't start well with Ronaldo missing his first penalty of the season for the club, however, Inter recovered and ran out 3-0 winners on the night and 3-2 winners on aggregate.

★ ★ ★

Guiseppe Giannini, the former Italian international and ex-Roma stalwart, has now parted company with Napoli, a club he joined only six weeks ago!

He returned to the Serie A after 18 months in Austria, but it appears now that his future is uncertain.

So the Napoli crisis keeps rolling on.

Little wonder they are alone at the bottom of the ladder. Little wonder, also, that a musical dedicated to Diego Maradona, is a sellout since it opened two months ago in Naples.

Fans can, at least, reminisce about the good old days when the little genius played in the light blue shirt.

★ ★ ★

The week's game at the San Siro Stadium between AC Milan and Bologna will see the return to Milan of a certain Roberto Baggio, now playing with the struggling Bologna side.

Baggio spent the last two seasons at AC Milan after transferring from Juventis, where he had four outstanding years, although his two years with Milano turned into a nightmare for the player once rated as the world's greatest.

He was hardly able to secure a starting berth and if anyone has a point to prove against the former giants of Italian football, it surely must be Baggio. The other games this week are:

Bari v Piacenza
Brescia v Roma
Fiorentina v Atalanta
Juventus v Empoli
Lazio v Vicenza
Parma v Lecce
Sampdoria v Napoli
Udinese v Inter

Champions' League Update

Eindhoven drew 2-2 with Barcelona but neither side managed to go through from Group C.

Abelardo was involved in the first two goals, scoring for Barcelona after 31 minutes before adding an own goal for Eindhoven four minutes after the break. The Dutch had a possible chance of qualifying as one of the best runners-up when Gilles De Bilde scored to put them 2-1 ahead. But Giovanni's 67th minute equaliser brought the scores level, thus ending Eindhoven's hopes.

Bayern Munich fell victim to their own sloppiness as they lost 1-0 to Gothenburg, courtesy of an own goal, to give the Swedes only their second win in their Champions' League campaign. The result changed little however, with Bayern already through to the quarter-finals prior to the match and Gothenburg, the Group E wooden spooners.

Everything that could go wrong for Bayern did. Defensive bulwark, Thomas Helmer, withdrew after 20 minutes with a knee injury and may not play again this year. After an uninspiring first half in cold, damp conditions, Bayern's Markus Babbel passed the ball slowly back to keeper Oliver Kahn in the 51st minute.

Kahn took his eye off the ball and watched the ball crawl over the line for Gothenburg's winning goal.

RESULTS

GROUP A

Sparta Prague 0 — Borussia Dortmund 3
Möller 30
Kirovski 47
Booth 71

Galatasaray 1 — Parma 1
Chiesa 50 — Ilie 52

GROUP B

FC Kosice 0 — Feyenoord 1
Bronckhorst 81

Juventus 1 — Manchester United 0
Inzaghi 83

GROUP C

PSV 2 — Barcelona 2
Abelardo 30 — Abelardo 4og
Giovanni 67 — De Bilde 46

Newcastle Utd 2 — Dynamo Kiev 0
Barnes 1
Pearce 21

GROUP D

Real Madrid 4 — Porto 0
Hierro 5
Suker 30,72p
Carlos 49

Olympiakos 2 — Rosenborg 2
Mavrogenidis 48 — Rushfeldt 50,69
Djordjevic 88

GROUP E

Bayern Munich 0 — IFK Gothenburg 1
Babbel 51og

PSG 2 — Besiktas 1
Gave 24 — Mehmet 40
Simone 59

GROUP F

Sporting Lisbon 2 — Lierse 1
Ramirez 47 — Haagdoren 17
Gimenez 65

Bayer Leverkusen 2 — Monaco 2
Beinlich 29 — Pignol 63
Meijer 57 — Henry 81

FINAL STANDINGS

GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dortmund	6	5	0	1	14	3	15
Parma	6	2	3	1	6	5	9
S Prague	6	1	2	3	6	11	5
Galatasaray	6	1	1	4	4	11	4

GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Manchester Utd	6	5	0	1	14	5	15
Juventus	6	4	0	2	12	8	12
Feyenoord	6	3	0	3	8	10	9
FC Kosice	6	0	0	6	2	13	0

GROUP C

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
D Kiev	6	3	2	1	13	6	11
PSV	6	2	3	1	9	8	9
Newcastle Utd	6	2	1	3	7	8	7
Barcelona	6	1	2	3	7	14	5

GROUP D

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Real Madrid	6	4	1	1	15	4	13
Rosenborg	6	3	2	1	13	8	11
Olympiakos	6	1	2	3	6	14	5
Porto	6	1	1	4	3	11	4

GROUP E

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
B Munich	6	4	0	2	13	6	12
PSG	6	4	0	2	11	10	12
Besiktas	6	2	0	4	6	9	6
Gothenburg	6	2	0	4	4	9	6

GROUP F

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Monaco	6	4	1	1	15	8	13
Leverkusen	6	4	1	1	11	7	13
S Lisbon	6	2	1	3	9	11	7
Lierse	6	0	1	5	3	12	1

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UK TALK

WITH MICKY BROCK

Stuart Sacked

Charlton have sacked defender Jamie Stuart following the player's recent admission that he had taken drugs.

Stuart's contract was not due to expire until 30 June 1999 but manager Alan Curbishley, reeling after Stuart became the fifth Charlton player in four years to be caught taking drugs, said: "Jamie's actions have cast a shadow of suspicion over the whole club.

"The club and I believe there was no other decision to make. I have assembled a squad of highly professional and committed players here, which is the reason why we are enjoying a successful start to the season."

Stuart confessed to taking cocaine and marijuana earlier this month after failing a dope test. The results were an embarrassment to a club who pride themselves on their drug education programs.

Managing Director Peter Varney said: "I do not believe any professional club has worked harder than Charlton to educate their players, at all levels, on the evil of drugs.

"In taking the decision to terminate Jamie's contract the club have demonstrated their determination to protect their good name, whatever the cost."

The sacking came a day after striker Clive Mendonca lifted the club one place to sixth in the First Division. He scored both goals in the 2-1 win over Sheffield United at The Valley.

Dozen Want 'The Off'

The contentious issue of a Football League elite is back on the agenda, with the proposal to form a First Division Super League to be put before clubs. The plan, one of four radical proposals designed to shake up the structure of the Nationwide League, is for the formation of a Super League comprising 12 clubs. The criteria for the lucky dozen is likely to be based not strictly on results and league positions, but also on quality of stadiums, resources and finance.

"We are beginning to provide a structure that allows all clubs to do better things if successful," said League chairman David Sheepshanks.

The proposals will be put before the 72 League clubs tomorrow and, if accepted, could become a reality next season.

It is not the first time that radical plans to change the League structure have been proposed. A breakaway First Division of the Premier League has been suggested in the past and, last season, League chairmen were urged to accept draft proposals for a scrapping of the three division set-up.

The plans proposed that the first and second divisions would remain but the third would be split regionally on a north and south basis, boosted by 16 clubs moving in from the GM Vauxhall Conference.

The proposals were not received with overwhelming enthusiasm from a sufficient number of League chairmen however, and the plan was shelved.

Bolton Appeal

Bolton are to appeal against midfielder Alan Thompson's first-half dismissal in their 3-1 defeat at Blackburn. Manager Colin Todd said: "We have looked carefully at the match video and believe it justifies an appeal on the player's behalf."

'High Noon' Clash

Chelsea and Manchester United will meet in a 'high noon' FA Cup third-round clash at Stamford Bridge on January 4.

The tie will be televised live on Sky Television and will precede the match between Everton and Newcastle, which will be shown on ITV two hours later.

The game between Chelsea, the current FA Cup holders, and United, the Premiership champions and 1996 Cup winners, is expected to generate more than $5 million.

It was the outstanding tie to come out of the hat and it will produce in excess of $2.5m in gate receipts.

The other big London tie to come out of the draw has paired Premiership strugglers Tottenham with Kevin Keegan's Second Division Fulham. It was decided to make that match the live Monday night game on Sky on January 5.

Hollins to stay at QPR

John Hollins has been confirmed as assistant to new Queens Park Rangers manager Ray Harford.

Hollins stepped up from his position as reserve-team chief to act as caretaker-manager after the departure of Stewart Houston and his No 2, Bruce Rioch, last month.

But, after enjoying his spell in charge of the first team, he is now looking forward to working alongside Harford.

Wimbledon Back Home?

Wimbledon fans have been given renewed hope that the club could finally be moving back home.

The club issued a joint statement with Merton council, vowing: 'We wish to reassure the supporters of Wimbledon FC that the club and the council share a common goal - to do everything possible to get the Dons back to Merton.'

Wimbledon and Merton council - the local authority governing the club's natural home area in south London - have been at loggerheads for many years.

Palace Under Threat

Crystal Palace's proposed link-up with Juventus could be jeopardised by imminent changes in regulations governing the Italian stock market.

Juventus officials are currently at Selhurst Park looking at all aspects of the Premiership club. They are considering buying a ten per cent stake in Palace for $7 million.

Chairman Ron Noades has put the club up for sale for a price of $70 million. Director Mark Goldberg owns ten per cent and is attempting to organise a city syndicate to raise the other $54 million by next February. Goldberg plans a stock market float in the next three years.

For Juve, one of the attractions of buying into an English Premiership club is that they too can launch on the stock market, something which, up to now, has been difficult to do in Italy.

However, this situation could change soon with the news that stock market regulatory agency, Consob, have made it easier for teams to be listed on Milan's Bourse.

Clubs will be exempted from rules requiring three consecutive years of profit for new companies to be quoted.

Most Italian clubs have primitive marketing and commercial organisations and have been in the red for years.

Italy's biggest clubs, including Juventus, have posted severe losses recently because of expensive investments in new stars and the effect of the Bosman ruling, which eliminated end-of-contract transfer fees.

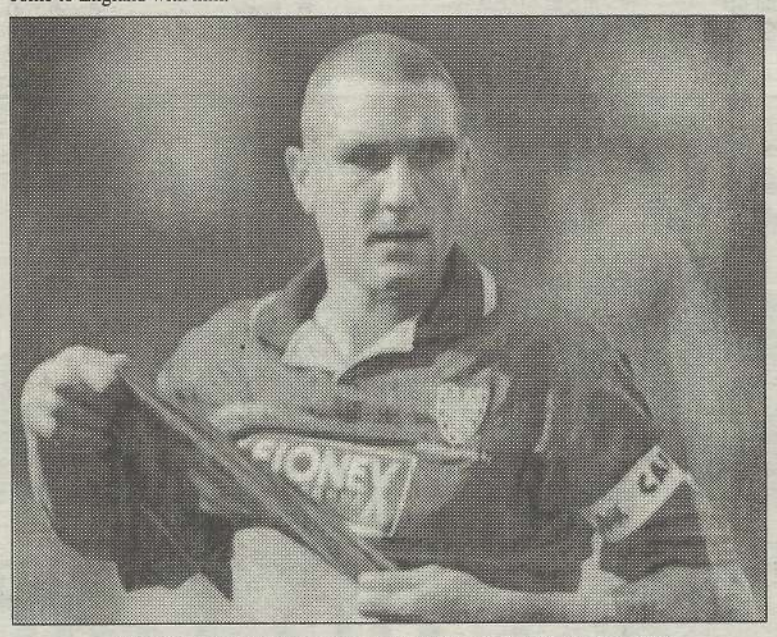
Filbert St Shuffle?

Leicester could be moving to a new 40,000-seat stadium in time for the millennium. That would mean ditching plans to redevelop Filbert Street, which has been branded "half football ground, half bicycle shed," by chairman Tom Smeaton. Chief executive Barrie Pierpoint said yesterday: "All but one member of our fans' forums have voted in favour of relocation if the cost made it a viable prospect."

The missus is too expensive!

Southampton have pulled out of a deal for Norwegian midfield player Bjorn Johansen, because the player demanded extra money for his wife.

The transfer fell through after Johansen wanted improved terms to allow his wife to leave her highly-paid job as a solicitor to come to England with him.



Vinnie's 'Crazy Gang' may be staying in London after all?

Saints had agreed a fee of $450,000 with Tromso, who were knocked out of the European Cup-winners Cup by Chelsea on a 9-4 aggregate, but manager Dave Jones said: "Since I can't find a place for her in the side unfortunately, the deal has fallen through. He wanted a family package and we were not prepared to do that. It is disappointing he has chosen to stay there.

"It doesn't show a great deal of ambition on his part and, if he does not have that drive, perhaps it is best for him to stay where he is.

"We were prepared to gamble and had offered him the chance to play in the Premiership. The transfer had been agreed but he wanted too much money and we are not prepared to pay him it as compensation for his wife."

Scottish 'Breakaway'

The Scottish FA have warned the top ten clubs against forcing through their proposed breakaway league via the courts.

The ruling body's intervention in the ongoing dispute between the premier division sides and the minnows came after they received complaints from ten lower league clubs over writs issued against them.

They claim the legal wrangling that marred discussions between the two sides — even before the league management committee vote, blocking the ten's applications to resign from the league — is in breach of the articles of the association.

Celtic For Sale

Celtic owner, Fergus McCann, plans to sell his shareholding and retire in 18 months' time but said he would ensure there was no hostile takeover of the Scottish premier league club.

McCann, a Scots-born Canadian who has turned the club's finances around since taking control in 1994, said in a statement released on the London Stock Exchange that he would retire in mid-1999.

"Suggested takeovers are complete nonsense as I hold just over 50 percent of the ordinary shares. That makes a takeover impossible without my consent," McCann said.

"Ideally I would like to find a way to make some of my shares available to existing shareholders. However, I think the most likely scenario will be a mixture of existing shareholders and institutions. What I will guarantee is that ownership of the club will not fall into the wrong hands."

When McCann bought 146,000 shares and a 51 percent stake in Celtic, for $14.9 million in 1994, he said the club faced bankruptcy, had a very poor stadium and only 7,100 season ticket-holders.

They are now close to completion of a $49.6 million stadium, with seating for over 60,000, making it the largest in Britain.

The club is now financially secure, over $33.1 million has been invested in new players and there are 40,000 season ticket-holders. Celtic shares are currently quoted at $413 each.

Vale: Billy Bremner

The death of former Scotland captain Billy Bremner has been marked by a flood of tributes from former teammates, managers and fans.

The combative midfielder, who spent his entire club playing career in England, died from a heart attack at the age of 54.

Current Scotland coach Craig Brown led the praise for Bremner, capped 54-times. "Scottish football has lost a legend. Billy was a terrific player and an inspiration," said Brown.

"If we had a team of 11 players like Billy Bremner, that is all we would need to take on Brazil again next summer."

Scotland face Brazil in the World Cup group stages, reviving memories of the 1974 tournament when Bremner led Scotland against the then world champions.

The game was drawn 0-0 and Scotland failed to qualify for the quarter-finals, despite being unbeaten. Although Bremner played superbly in that goalless draw in Frankfurt, he will often be remembered for a miss from two metres out that could have earned Scotland their greatest scalp.

But his achievements in the blue of Scotland and white of Leeds United far outweigh any minor mishaps.

He played a prominent part in his country's famous 3-2 victory over England at Wembley in 1967, only nine months after Alf Ramsey's team had won the World Cup.

"Billy was magnificent," said teammate Denis Law, while former Aberdeen manager Alex Smith described him as "not a good player but a great one."

Another former Aberdeen boss, Manchester United's Alex Ferguson, said Bremner would be remembered as one of the very best players Scotland had produced. "With Billy in midfield, especially when he was captain, it was hard to see how any team could lose," he added.

While his influence on Scotland was perhaps limited by the talent around him, he had no such problems for Leeds, the club he led during the greatest period in their history in the late 60s and early 70s. He tasted league and F.A. Cup glory and came desperately close to winning the European Cup in 1975 before being eventually denied by Bayern Munich in the Final.

"He had everything," said former Leeds and Scotland teammate Bobby Collins. "People recall his determination, his leadership, his fiery temperament, but they forget what a wonderful player he was as well."

Billy Bremner: Tributes have flooded in for the great man.

By STUART JONES

Weird & Wonderful

1945-1946

Although the League did not officially get underway this season, there still were a myriad of competitions to keep the fans happy. In England, the top Northern and Southern teams played in a regionalised competition.

The lower division clubs were split into four groups and played League football for the first half of the season and Cup football (League Cup) for the second half. Additionally, the FA Cup was reintroduced and, for the only time in its history, the games were played over two legs.

The main competitions were geographically divided by the Trent River with Sheffield United winning in the north, and Birmingham in the south (each team played 42 games). The North was a close affair — Charlton were looking to win on the final day to take the title — but could only manage a draw, and hence they finished a disappointing third.

The Third Division saw Accrington win the north-west, Rotherham take out the north-east, QPR successful in the northern section of the south (?!) and the victorious team in the south section of the south was Crystal Palace.

In the north the teams played 18 games, in the south 20. This was played until Christmas and after the new year two Cups were played, the northern and southern third division Cups.

In the two-legged northern final Rotherham won 5-4 on aggregate. In the South they played a one-off final and Bournemouth defeated Walsall 1-0. The only two clubs not to play this particular season were Hull City and New Brighton.

The Southern League was re-established, although only 11 teams participated, and not all the fixtures were completed. Chelmsford ended up running away with the title, their winning margin being five points. The Southern League Cup final was a repeat of the 1939/40 affair with Chelmsford playing Worcester City. The first leg ended 3-3 but in the Essex return clash Chelmsford won 6-1, and hence took the title. Meanwhile, Barnet defeated Bishop Auckland in the FA Amateur Cup.

The big news of the season was the return of the FA Cup. The Semi-Finals were one-off games and that's all it took for Charlton to beat Bolton (1-0).

In the other game there was a 1-1 draw between Derby and Birmingham, however Derby won the replay in emphatic style, 4-0.

So to the first FA Cup final after the War and 98,215 people turned up to hallowed Wembley Stadium. Charlton had been after the double but came up empty handed in the League, and in the Final as Stamps with two, Doherty, and Turner (twice) all scored. Turner actually scored for both sides, but his Athletic team went down in extra-time thanks to that flood of goals. Derby skipper Jack Nicholas happily collected the FA Cup trophy for the Rams.

North of the Border and things almost got back to the normal. Unlike England, Scotland did not return to its FA Cup for this season. The League was divided into an A and B League, with an eastern league consisting of seven teams, which was won by Dundee Reserves for the first half of the season.

A new team called Stirling Albion was formed from the old Kings Park. Believe it or not they called home an eighteenth century estate and had to cut down Oak trees to clear the ground for a pitch. The same financial backer of Kings Park controlled Albion, and that name, Albion, in a unique marketing campaign years ahead of itself, came from the make of his coal trucks!

Rangers won the A League by a clear eight points over Hibs, to complete their total domination of wartime football in Scotland.

In Division B Dundee finished with an even bigger gap — ten points over East Fife. The Southern League Cup final was played between Aberdeen and Rangers, with the Dons coming out victorious 3-2 in front of 121,000 people at Hampden Park.

Also the Scottish Victory Cup (open to all clubs whether league or non league)was played, and this final went to ... Rangers!! The final scoreline read: Rangers 3 Hibernian 1.

Around Europe the Champions were:

Austria: Sk Rapid Wien (Cup: Sk Rapid Wien)
Belgium: KV Mechelen
Bulgaria: Levski Sofia (Cup: Levski Sofia
France: OSC Lille (Cup: OSC Lille)
Germany: No leagues
Holland: Haarlem
Italy: AC Torino
Poland: Polonia Warszawa
Portugal: OS Belenenses (Cup: Sporting CP)
Romania: No league
Russia: CDKA Mosvka (Cup: Spartak Moskva)
Spain: Sevilla CF (Cup: Real Madrid CF)
Sweden: IFK Norrkoping (Cup: Malmo FF)
Switzerland: Servette FC Geneve (Cup: Grasshopper Zurich)

ENGLAND

NORTH

	P	W	L	D	F	A	Pts
Sheff Utd	42	27	9	6	112	62	60
Everton	42	23	10	9	88	54	55
Bolton	42	20	11	11	67	45	51
Man Utd	42	19	12	11	98	62	49
Sheff Wed	42	20	14	8	67	60	48
Newcastle	42	21	16	5	106	70	47
Chest'fld	42	17	13	12	68	49	46
Barnsley	42	17	14	11	76	68	45
B'pool	42	18	15	9	94	92	45
Man City	42	20	18	4	78	75	44
L'pool	42	17	16	9	80	70	43
Mid'boro	42	17	16	9	75	87	43
Stoke	42	18	18	6	88	79	42
B'ford PA	42	17	19	6	71	84	40
Hud'fld	42	17	21	4	90	89	38
Burnley	42	13	19	10	63	84	36
Grimsby	42	13	20	9	61	89	35
Sund'land	42	15	22	5	55	83	35
Preston	42	14	22	6	70	77	34
Bury	42	12	20	10	60	85	34
B'burn	42	11	24	7	60	111	29
Leeds	42	9	26	7	66	118	25

SOUTH

	P	W	L	D	F	A	Pts
B'ham	42	28	9	5	96	45	61
A Villa	42	25	6	11	106	58	61
Charlton	42	25	7	10	92	45	60
Derby	42	24	11	7	101	62	55
WBA	42	22	12	8	104	69	52
Wolves	42	20	11	11	75	48	51
West Ham	42	20	11	11	94	76	51
Fulham	42	20	12	10	93	73	50
Tot'ham	42	22	17	3	78	81	47
Chelsea	42	19	17	6	92	80	44
Arsenal	42	16	15	11	76	73	43
Millwall	42	17	17	8	79	105	42
Coventry	42	15	17	10	70	69	40
Brentford	42	14	18	10	82	72	38
N Forest	42	12	17	13	72	73	37
Soton	42	14	19	9	97	105	37
Swansea	42	15	20	7	90	112	37
Luton	42	13	22	7	60	92	33
P'mouth	42	11	25	6	66	87	28
Leicester	42	8	27	7	57	101	23
Newport	42	9	31	2	52	125	20
Plymouth	42	3	31	8	39	120	14

THIRD DIVISION NORTH

WEST REGION (PLAYED 18)

Accrington 24, Rochdale 22, Crewe 21, Chester 21, Wrexham 20, Tranmere 20, Stockport 15, Oldham 15, Barrow 12, Southport 10

EAST REGION (PLAYED 18)

Rotherham 26, Darlington 26, Gateshead 24, Doncaster 20, York 18, Halifax 18, Bradford City 16, Carlisle 13, Lincoln 10, Hartlepool 9

THIRD DIVISION SOUTH

NORTH REGION (PLAYED 20)

QPR 32, Norwich 26, Port Vale 24, Watford 22, Ipswich 20, Notts County 20, Northampton 19, Clapton Orient 16, Walsall 15, Southend 15, Mansfield 11

SOUTH REGION (PLAYED 20)

Crystal Palace 29, Cardiff 28, Bristol City 24, Brighton & Hove Albion 21, Bristol Rovers 20, Swindon 19, Bournemouth & BA 17, Aldershot 17, Exeter 16, Reading 15, Torquay 14

SOUTHERN LEAGUE

Chelmsford City (18) 34, Hereford United (20) 29, Bath City (20) 26, Cheltenham Town (18) 22, Barry Town (20) 20, Yeovil & Petters United (18) 18, Worcester City (18) 18, Colchester United (20) 17, Bedford Town (16) 15, Swindon Town Res (18) 14, Cardiff City Res (20) 13

(Matches played in brackets)

SCOTLAND

SOUTHERN DIVISION A

	P	W	L	D	F	A	Pts
Rangers	30	22	4	4	85	41	48
Hibernian	30	17	7	6	67	37	40
Aberdeen	30	16	8	6	73	41	38
Celtic	30	12	7	11	55	44	35
Mot'well	30	11	10	9	54	55	31
Clyde	30	11	10	9	64	54	31
Hearts	30	11	11	8	63	57	30
Queens Pk	30	11	11	8	60	60	30
T Lanark	30	14	14	2	63	68	30
Morton	30	9	10	11	72	69	29
Falkirk	30	11	14	5	62	70	27
Partick T	30	11	15	4	54	65	26
Q of Sth	30	9	15	6	62	82	24
St Mirren	30	9	16	5	54	70	23
Kilmarnock	30	7	15	8	56	87	22
Hamilton	30	5	19	6	44	88	16

SOUTHERN DIVISION B

	P	W	L	D	F	A	Pts
Dundee	26	21	3	2	92	28	44
East Fife	26	15	7	4	64	34	34
Ayr	26	15	7	4	69	43	34
Airdrie	26	14	7	5	69	50	33
Albion	26	14	10	2	45	41	30
St Johnstone	26	12	8	6	66	60	30
Alloa	26	12	10	4	59	53	28
Dumbarton	26	11	11	4	59	54	26
Dunfermline	26	10	12	4	63	47	24
Cowdenbeath	26	8	13	5	43	62	21
Stenhousmuir	26	6	15	5	36	89	17
Dundee Utd	26	6	17	3	46	70	15
Raith	26	6	18	2	48	80	14
Arbroath	26	6	18	2	40	88	14

SOUTH AMERICA

— Compiled by Mario Etchart —

Post World Cup Draw Quotes

"God is Argentinian!"
Clarin: Argentine newspaper

"Paraguay will be one of the contenders in France '98. We have a good squad and we can compete with any other team."
Jose Chilavert: Paraguay goalkeeper

"I don't want to sound too over optimistic, but I can assure Paraguayan fans that we will beat Spain and Nigeria, and draw with Bulgaria. We perform much better against strong teams."
Antonio Colman: Vice President PFA

"Easy for Argentina. The only difficult opposition will be Croatia."
Ole: Argentine newspaper

"Merci. Argentina is in the easiest group."
La Nacion: Argentine newspaper

"By logic, Argentina will win the group and will have to face Romania, England or Colombia in the second phase, with Holland, Germany or Yugoslavia in the quarter-finals, and Brazil or France in the semi-finals."
Pagina 12: Argentine newspaper

"Italy is a good team but not unbeatable. We don't have to be afraid of anybody. We have to concentrate on our game and let them worry about us."
Marcelo Salas: Chilean striker

"The only team better than us in the group is Italy. The task is not an easy one but we will qualify for the second round. I think we are going to cause more that just one surprise."
Ivan Zamorano: Chilean striker

"Italy always have a slow start in World Cups. That factor could help us very well. They are not unbeatable and their players are nothing out of this world. I believe the 'underdog' tag will suit us very well."
Elias Figueroa: former Chilean defender

"They may have the best national league in the world, but that is because of the standard of the foreign players playing for their clubs. The difference between Italy, Chile, Austria and Cameroon is not that great and I believe we have a good chance to qualify for the second round."
Pedro Reyes: Chilean defender.

Group 2	*Group 4*	*Group 8*
Austria	Bulgaria	***Argentina***
Cameroon	Nigeria	Croatia
Chile	***Paraguay***	Jamaica
Italy	Spain	Japan

Club Update

PENAROL UNBEATABLE

Penarol, the oldest and most popular club in Uruguay, continued their dominance in the local football scene by winning the Uruguayan pre-Libertadores League after a convincing 3-1 victory over arch-rivals Nacional.

The champions finished unbeaten in the competition, scoring their fourth consecutive victory over Nacional during the 1997 season.

The brilliant U/20 Uruguayan striker, Marcelo Zalayeta, who was recently transferred to Italian Serie A side Juventus, scored twice in his final match for Penarol. Fellow striker Luis Romero added the third before former Uruguayan international, Ruben Sosa, pulled one back for Nacional.

Penarol, who won the Uruguayan title for the fifth time in a row, qualified for the 1998 Libertadores Cup. The other representative will be Nacional.

ARGENTINA

With only two rounds left, defending champions, River Plate (Millionaires), maintained their lead in the Argentine league, first phase, after two consecutive 3-0 victories over Independiente and Gimnasia y Esgrima of Jujuy, while nearest rival Boca Juniors, who were only one point behind the 'Millionaires', dropped back three points following their draw with Racing Club.

River Plate beat Independiente 3-0 with two goals from Marcelo Gallardo, and the other came from that man ... Marcelo Salas.

Meanwhile, Boca Juniors beat Gimnasia y Esgrima 1-0, away from home, with a dramatic strike from Martin Palermo in the game's last minute.

Colombian goalkeeper, Oscar Cordoba, was Boca's hero, keeping the side in the game against a persistent and skilful Gimnasia team.

In midweek, River defeated Gimnasia, again away from home, 3-0, and look to be in the driving seat to add another trophy to their illustrious name, not to mention their third consecutive Argentine title. Boca Juniors, who haven't won a local tournament since 1991, only managed a 0-0 draw with Racing, losing two valuable points in the race for the championship.

That could prove yet another disaster for Boca, the most popular Argentine club, after spending more than $30 million on players in the last two years. It could be the end of coach Hector Viera, who hasn't been able to deliver the title to the club, following in the footsteps of Carlos Bilardo.

The last successful coach at the club was Uruguayan Oscar Tavarez. Under his guidance, Boca won the 1991 title but, since then, neither Jorge Habberger, Luis Menotti, Silvio Marzolini or Bilardo were able to match it.

Viera's replacement could be Argentine national coach, Daniel Passarella (after the 1998 World Cup tournament of course), or possibly the former Argentine captain Diego Maradonna. Others mentioned have been Oscar Pernia, Cesar Menotti (again) and Jorge Valdano.

CHILE

Colo Colo maintained the lead in the Chilean national league after a dramatic 3-2 victory over Huachipato, while Universidad Catolica, one point behind the leaders, beat Puerto Montt 2-0 and third placed Audax Italiano defeated Cobreloa 4-2.

Other results:
Osorno 0 Temuco 0, Coquimbo 2 Union Espanola 1, Antofagasta 2 Palestino 1, Universidad de Chile 5 Concepcion 0, Santiago Wanderers 2 La Serena 2.

Standings:
Colo Colo 29, Uni Catolica 28, Audax Italiano 26, Uni de Chile 24, Cobreloa 21, Puerto Montt & Osorno 20, Coquimbo 17, Iluachipato 16.

ECUADOR

Results: Barcelona 3 Deportivo Quito 2, Nacional 1 Liga Deportiva 1, Emelec 3 Aucas 0.

Standings: Barcelona 4, Emelec 3, Liga Dep & Dep Quito 2, Nacional 1, Aucas 0.

The winner will qualify for the 1998 Libertadores Cup.

PERU

Results: (Pre-Libertadores league) Universitario 0 Sporting Cristal 0, Alianza Atletico 1 Melgar 1, Cienciano 3 Municipal 2

Standings: Sporting C 7, Universitario & Alianza 5, Cienciano 4, Melgar 2, Municipal 1.

Alianza Lima, the 1997 Peruvian champions, already qualify for the Libertadores Cup and the second representative will be the winner of the pre-Libertadores league.

COLOMBIA

The winner of the match between Quindio and Atletico Buaramanga, will face America of Cali, in the final of the Colombian national league. Quindio, with two goals from Argentine striker Daniel Tilger, defeated defending champions Deportivo 2-1, while Buaramanga thrashed Atletico Junior 4-0. (America won the first phase competition).

Other results: Caldas 2 Atletico Nacional 1, Millonarios 4 Cortulua 1.

Standings Group A: Quindio 10, Caldas 10, Atletico Nacional 8, Dep Cali 6

Standings Group B: Buaramanga & Millonarios 13, Atletico Jnr & Cortulua 4.

VENEZUELA

Results: Zulia 5 Llaneros 0, Caracas 0 Estudiantes 1, Minerven 2 Tachira 4, Nacional 3 Mineros 1, El Vigia 0 Trujillanos 2, Carabobo 1 Chacao 2.

Standings: Zulia 40, Chacoa 38, Trujillanos 33, Tachira 32, Caracas 28, Estudientes & Carabobo 27, Minerven 25, Nacional 23, Mineros 16, Llaneros 12, El Vigia 10.

Oscar Ruggeri: Genuine Leader

At 35 Oscar Ruggeri, one of the last great Argentine captains, has retired from the game he loves and played during a distinguished career that lasted more than 25 years, 17 of them at the highest level.

Born in Corral de Bustos, a little town in the central province of Cordoba, Ruggeri made his debut in the Argentine First Division on June 8, 1980, when playing as a defender for Boca Juniors, his first team. He later played for River Plate, Velez Sarsfield, San Lorenzo and Lanus.

He also played with Spanish clubs Logrones and Real Madrid, later going to Italy and signing with Ancona before heading to Mexico, where he starred with America.

During his career he played more than 425 matches in the Argentine league, scoring some 33 goals, and was capped 98 times for his country, adding a further eight strikes to his name. He won 13 different titles. His record is below.

Oscar Ruggeri

At Club Level:
1981: Argentine National League (Boca)
1986: Argentine National League (River P)
Libertadores Cup Winner
Toyota Cup Winner
Inter American Cup Winner
1990: Spanish First Division (Real M)
1992: CONCACAF Champions Trophy (America of Mex)
1995: Argentine Soccer League, Second Phase, (San Lorenzo)

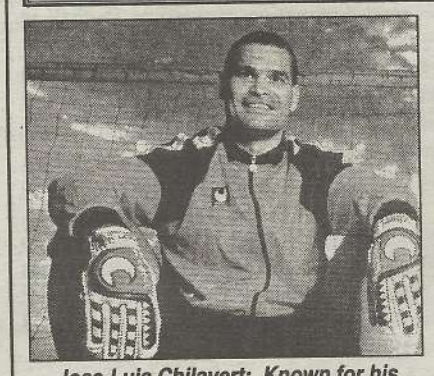
International Level:
1986: World Cup Winner
1991: Copa America Winner
1992: Kirin Cup Winner
FIFA Confederation championship, King Fahd Cup
1993: Copa America Winner

Additional:
Captain of the national team which came second in the 1990 World Cup in Italy,
Captain of Argentine side that came second in FIFA Confederations championship in 1993.

Ruggeri has retired in style, scoring goal number 48 for his last team, Lanus, in a match against Estudiantes de la Plate, in the Argentine league first phase.

The only title to elude this master was the CONMEBOL Cup with Lanus, losing in the Final against Atletico Mineiro (Brazil), but his leadership qualities will be remembered for a long time, qualities the national side is lacking today.

He will also be remembered for his long-lasting feud with arch-enemy, Paraguayan goalkeeper Jose Luis Chilavert, his loyalty to Diego Maradona and the continuous confrontations with Daniel Passarella, the current Argentine national coach, who left him out of the squad that has just qualified for France 98.



Jose-Luis Chilavert: Known for his long-lasting feud with Oscar Ruggeri.

Diego Maradona: Ruggeri remained loyal to him.

South American Supercup

Sao Paulo 0 River Plate 0

Sao Paulo of Brazil and Argentine champions River Plate drew 0-0 in the first leg of the South American Supercup Final, played at Sao Paulo's Morumbi Stadium, in front of 45,500 spectators.

The result puts River Plate in an excellent position to win their second major championship at club level in South America, when they face their Brazilian counterparts at their home ground, Monumental Stadium, in Buenos Aires on Dec 17 (tomorrow).

Line-Ups:

Sao Paulo: Rogerio, Ze Carlos, Edmilson, Alvaro (Reinaldo 61), Serginho, Alexandre, Sidney, Fabiano, Marcelinho, Dodo, Franza (Melo).

River Plate: Burgos, Diaz, Ayala, Berizzo, Sorin (Escudero 70), Monserrat, Astrada (Gancedo 57), Berti, Gallardo, Francescoli (Placente 67), Salas.

WORLD STOP PRESS

Top 100 of the World's Clubs

(1st December 1996 — 2nd December 1997 / by IFFHS)

1.	FC Barcelona	(Spain)	332.0
2.	Juventus FC Torino	(Italy)	318.5
3.	BV Borussia Dortmund	(Germany)	304.0
4.	FC Internazionale Milano	(Italy)	294.5
5.	CSD Colo Colo Santiago	(Chile)	273.0
6.	Manchester United FC	(England)	272.0
7.	Grêmio de Foot-Ball Porto-Alegrense	(Brazil)	261.5
8.	FC Schalke 04	(Germany)	254.0
9.	AS de Monaco	(France)	246.0
10.	CA River Plate Buenos Aires	(Argentina)	234.5
11.	CA Peñarol Montevideo	(Uruguay)	232.5
12.	Paris Saint-Germain FC	(France)	227.0
13.	Chelsea FC London	(England)	224.0
14.	Club Atlético de Madrid	(Spain)	218.0
15.	Parma AC	(Italy)	216.0
	Sevilla Betis Balopié	(Spain)	216.0
17.	CA Vélez Sarsfield	(Argentina)	211.5
18.	Steaua Bucuresti	(Romania)	202.0
	AJ Auxerroise	(France)	202.0
20.	FC Bayern München	(Germany)	200.0
21.	AFC Ajax Amsterdam	(Holland)	198.0
	CA Mineiro Belo Horizonte	(Brazil)	198.0
23.	Spartak Moscow	(Russia)	195.5
24.	SS Lazio Roma	(Italy)	194.5
25.	TSV Bayer Leverkusen	(Germany)	194.0
26.	Dynamo Kiev	(Ukraine)	192.5
27.	Rosenborg BK Trondheim	(Norge)	191.0
28.	MTK Budapest	(Hungary)	190.0
29.	Vicenza Calcio	(Italy)	189.5
30.	Real Madrid CF	(Spain)	186.0
31.	Olympique Lyonnais	(France)	184.0
32.	Glasgow Celtic FC	(Scotland)	183.5
33.	CDC Atético Nacional Medellin	(Colombia)	182.0
34.	Roda JC Kerkrade	(Holland)	180.5
35.	Liverpool FC	(England)	180.0
	VfB Stuttgart	(Germany)	180.0
37.	EC Cruzeiro Belo Horizonte	(Brazil)	177.5
38.	RSC Anderlecht	(Belgium)	177.0
39.	Likomotiv Moscow	(Russia)	176.5
40.	Rotor Wolgograd	(Russia)	174.0
	SK Slavia Praha	(Czech Rep.)	174.0
42.	FC do Porto	(Portugal)	172.5
43.	Newcastle United FC	(England)	172.0
44.	Racing Club Avellaneda	(Argentina)	167.5
45.	Feyenoord Rotterdam	(Holland)	167.0
46.	CR Vasco da Gama Rio de Janeiro	(Brazil)	166.0
47.	NK Croatia Zagreb	(Croatia)	165.0
48.	CR Flamengo Rio de Janeiro	(Brazil)	164.5
	AC Sparta Praha	(Czech Rep.)	164.5
50.	Sporting Club Bastia	(France)	160.0
51.	Sporting Cristal Backus Lima	(Peru)	156.0
52.	Germinal Ekeren	(Belgium)	155.0
53.	CD Universidad Católica Santiago	(Chile)	153.0
54.	São Paulo FC	(Brazil)	152.0
	Karlsruher SC	(Germany)	152.0
56.	AEK Athens	(Greece)	151.5
57.	Asociación Deportivo Cali	(Colombia)	150.0
58.	Club Brugge KV	(Belgium)	147.5
59.	CD América Cali	(Colombia)	147.0
60.	Glasgow Rangers FC	(Scotland)	146.0
	SK Sturm Graz	(Austria)	146.0
	Racing Club de Strasbourg	(France)	146.0
63.	PSV Eindhoven	(Holland)	145.5
64.	CD Cruz Azul Ciudad de México	(Mexico)	145.0
65.	Dundee United FC	(Scotland)	144.5
66.	Sporting Clube de Portugal Lisboa	(Portugal)	144.0
	Besiktas SK Istanbul	(Turkey)	144.0
68.	CD Los Millonarios Bogotá	(Colombia)	142.5
69.	FC de Metz	(France)	140.0
70.	CA Independiente Avellaneda	(Argentina)	139.0
71.	Aston Villa FC	(England)	138.0
72.	Sporting Club de Braga	(Portugal)	137.5
73.	Brøndby IF	(Denmark)	137.0
74.	FC København	(Denmark)	136.0
	TSV München 1860	(Germany)	136.0
76.	Colon de Santa Fe	(Argentina)	135.5
77.	Bolivar La Paz	(Bolivia)	135.0
	Shachtjor Donetsk	(Ukraine)	135.0
	Ferencvárosi TC Budapest	(Hungary)	135.0
80.	CA Lanús	(Argentina)	134.0
	Olympiakos Pireas	(Greece)	134.0
82.	Kilmarnock FC	(Scotland)	133.0
	OGC Nice	(France)	133.0
84.	CCD Tolima Ibague	(Colombia)	132.0
85.	FK Jablonec	(Czech)	131.0
	PAOK Saloniki	(Greece)	131.0
87.	NK Hajduk Split	(Croatia)	129.0
88.	Esperance S. de Tunis	(Tunisia)	128.0
	Athletic Club de Bilbao	(Spain)	128.0
90.	FK Crvena zvezda Beograd	(Yugoslavia)	126.5
91.	EA Guingamp	(France)	125.0
	Widzew Lódez	(Poland)	125.0
93.	Udinese Calcio	(Italy)	124.0
94.	CA Estudiantes de La Plata	(Argentina)	123.0
95.	FC Girondins de Bordeaux	(France)	122.0
	SK Rapid Wien	(Austria)	122.0
97.	Sport Lisboa e Benfica	(Portugal)	121.5
98.	Vitoria Bahia Salvador	(Brazil)	121.0
	Aarhus GF af 1880	(Denmark)	121.0
	1. FC Kosice	(Slovakia)	121.0
226.	Sydney United FC	(Australia)	70.5
	South Melbourne Lakers	(Australia)	70.5

Ronaldo Leaving Inter

Ronaldo is leaving Inter Milan a happy man after the Brazilian ace helped his side to their heroic UEFA Cup victory over Strasbourg.

Facing almost certain elimination from the third round after losing 2-0 in France, Inter turned it round with a stirring 3-0 win, thanks to goals from Ronaldo, Javier Zanetti and Diego Simeone.

Ronaldo, who is joining Brazil at the Confederation Cup in Saudi Arabia, missed three of the four scoring chances which came his way, including an unlucky 13th minute penalty.

But he said: "I'm leaving, happy, because we got through to the next round and it wasn't easy.

"I have to go, but I'll be back soon. Inter will only be without me for two games and my thoughts will very much be with my teammates."

As for the spot-kick, the Brazilian admitted: "It's a long time since I missed a penalty. But even after that, I never had any doubts that we would come through. The team were on form, and it showed."

Coach Gigi Simoni was also among the happy men at San Siro as the victory was partly down to his powers of persuasion.

"I always thought that we would succeed, because I realised that even by playing at 50 percent of our true potential during the away leg, we still managed to create four or five scoring chances.

"That was what I convinced the team of when we came together to prepare for this match. 'You are the better team, now show it' was the message I gave them."

Simoni nevertheless admitted to a few moments of tension, particularly at the start.

"I did get a bit worried when Ronaldo missed the penalty early in the match," he said. "But I also knew there was time to make up for it."

Paying tribute to the inspired performance of midfielder Francesco Moriero, watched by Italy coach Cesare Maldini, and the masterful defending of skipper Giuseppe Bergomi, Simoni highlighted the team effort.

"I hope that everyone saw the exceptional abilities shown by Moriero and by the other players," he said.

"Inter are a side that can compete at the very highest level, and on top of that we have Ronaldo."

Latal Operation

Schalke 04's Czech midfielder, Radoslav Latal, underwent groin surgery last Thursday and will be out of action for the rest of the year, the UEFA Cup champions said.

Friendlies On

Two planned soccer friendlies between hosts Zambia and Nigeria have not been cancelled, the Zambian High Commission in Lagos said.

'Newspaper reports that the matches had been put off are false,' said acting Zambian High Commissioner Lieutenant Colonel Bizwayo Nkunika in a statement.

Zambian newspapers quoted Gerald Nyirenda, of the Zambian sports ministry, as saying his government had ordered the withdrawal of the invitation to play Nigeria on Saturday and Wednesday (tomorrow) because of Commonwealth sanctions on Nigeria.

The Nigerian military government's hanging of nine minority rights activists in 1995 led to its suspension from the Commonwealth, comprising Britain and its former colonies, and limited sanctions, including a severance of sporting links.

Nigerian soccer authorities said at the time they were unaware of the cancellation and would travel with a squad of foreign and home-based players to Lusaka for both matches.

Nkunika's statement said: 'The government of the Republic of Zambia has already authorised the issuance of visas by the High Commission in Lagos.'

The first game would be played in Lusaka and the second in Zambia's copperbelt town of Kitwe, it added.

The East Africans would be using the two matches as a warm-up for the African Nations' Cup Finals at Burkina Faso in February, while Nigeria are preparing for next year's World Cup Finals in France.

Cantona's Return

Former Manchester United idol, Eric Cantona, is rated at 10-1 to make a Premiership comeback in 1998, according to a new list of novelty bets published by British bookmakers William Hill.

The controversial Frenchman retired from professional football last summer to develop an acting career, but Hills say that he is more likely to make a return to English football at the age of 31 than Damon Hill is to win next year's British Grand Prix.

And the bookmakers clearly do not rate Scotland's France 98 World Cup chances, quoting them at 1-2 to fail to qualify from their group.

The Scots, placed in the same group as world champions Brazil in last week's draw, are quoted at just 8-1 to fail to score in the tournament and 100-1 to win the World Cup, the same odds as goal-shy defender Tony Adams to become England's top scorer in the finals.

England are 4-1 to fail to qualify from their group, 7-1 to win the World Cup and 14-1 not to win any matches during France 98, although Alan Shearer is 2-1 to be his country's top goalscorer, if he recovers from his injury in time.

The Spice Girls are 20-1 to sing the official England World Cup song and continue a link with the squad already established with Victoria's highly publicised relationship with England midfielder David Beckham.

Please Explain

Slavia Prague demanded an explanation from Bundesliga leaders FC Kaiserslautern after the Czech club's defender Sladjan Asanin flew to Germany for a workout with the team.

"It is unjustifiable. We are asking the leadership of Kaiserslautern to explain. FIFA regulations have been broken," Slavia manager Jaromir Seterle said.

He said that under FIFA rules, a club may only hold talks without the permission of a player's current team, if his contract has expired, or will expire within six months.

"Neither of these conditions are currently the case," Seterle added.

FIFA can levy a fine up to 50,000 Swiss francs ($34,300) if Kaiserslautern are found guilty of breaking its rules.

Asanin travelled to Germany and was scheduled to again fly there, the daily Mlada Fronta Dnes reported.

"My manager informed (Slavia's management) that we were invited to go to Kaiserslautern," the paper quoted the Croat as saying.

He added that he had taken part in a training session while at Kaiserslautern. "Everything there is super, including the stadium. I would like to transfer as early as January, but that does not rest with me," he noted.

The two teams held talks earlier this year on a possible transfer of Asanin, reputedly for three million marks ($1.7 million), but no agreement was reached.

Slavia are currently on a winter break after struggling to a 7-5-1 record to stand ten points behind First Division leaders Sparta Prague.

Kaiserslautern made history after beating Bayern Munich 2-0 to move seven points clear of the German champions, becoming the first newly promoted team to lead the 34 year-old Bundesliga at the Christmas break.

David Beckham: His girlfriend's band, Spice Girls, are rated at 20-1 to sing the official England World Cup song!

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